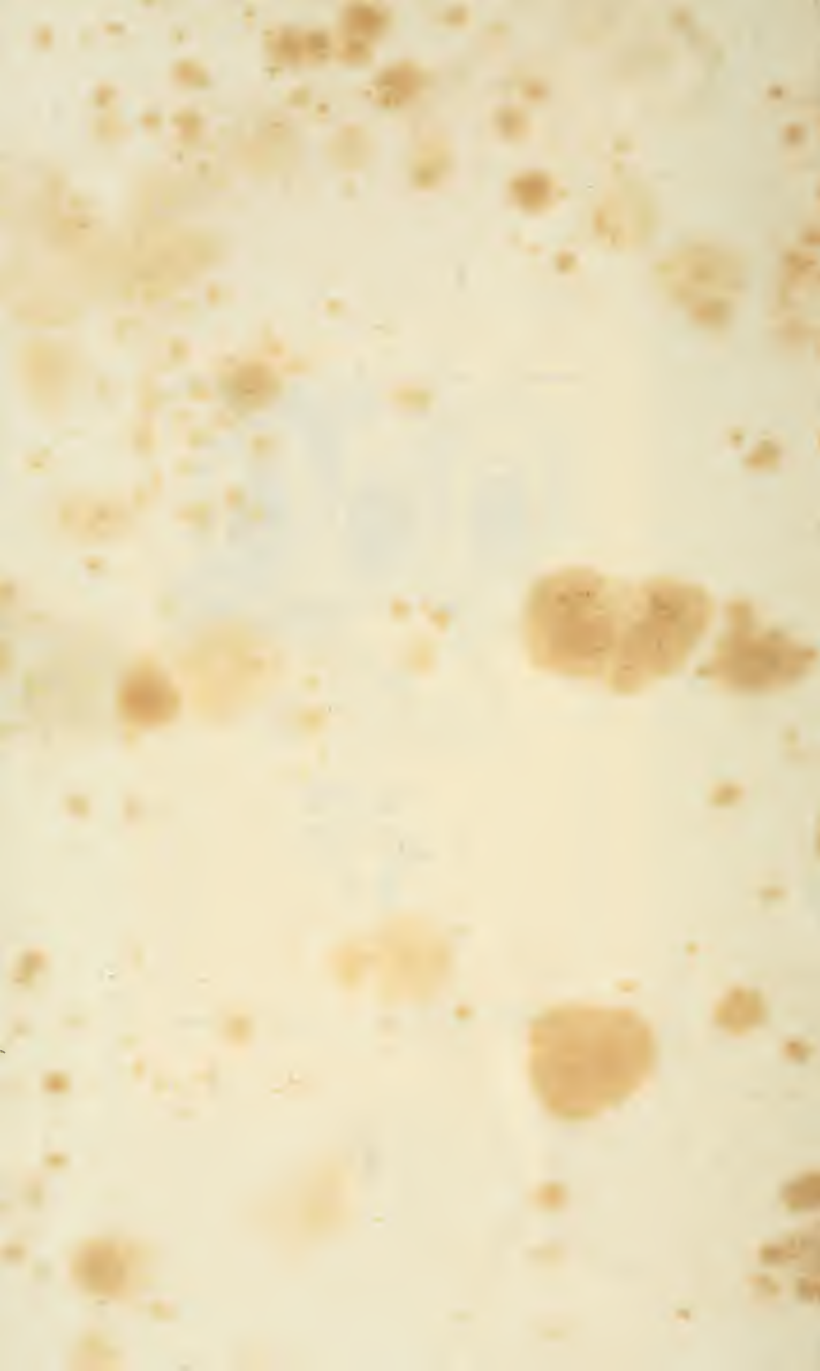


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SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

VOL. III.



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SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL III.

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SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

CHAPTER I.

THE good old Count Lorenzo, full of years and honour, after attending the remains of the Emperor Frederic to the grave, departed to a better world, about three weeks before the arrival of Rinaldo at Naples, who now found himself at liberty to follow his own inclinations. His first impulse, was to have returned to the Milanese, and, taking possession of his property, fulfil his engagements with Angelina, and from thence proceed to his principal residence in Piedmont; but chance made him at first delay this honourable resolution, and afterwards entirely abandon it.

On his first arrival, proceeding to the Hotel of Pachino, where his noble father had resided, he was received with every mark of respect, and attention, by the Count, and his two daughters, who condoled with him on the recent loss of his excellent parent, whose virtues afforded an endless subject of praise, particularly to the youngest sister Pauline, who loved to dwell on his valour, his integrity, and generosity of disposition, and there was so much enthusiasm in her character and manner, that Rinaldo soon thought that nature had never produced an object so captivating, and though he had no ostensible business to detain him, yet excuses were never wanting to defer his departure from day to day, until the gentle Angelina was entirely forgotten.

Whether the northern ladies were of a colder disposition, or the soft climate of Naples was more congenial to the growth of love, in all its genuine ardour, certain it is, that he had no reason to complain of the

want of passion in the voluptuous Pauline, as her dark eye now flashed with fire, then languished with delight, whenever he caressed her; and her youthful heart beat responsive to his enthusiastic admiration, as he confessed that he had never loved till now. But when, in the ardour of his passion, he cursed those odious legal forms which only tended to fetter congenial hearts, with their enslaving restrictions, the prudent Pauline softly hinted, she supposed he did not include the marriage ceremonies in this censure, the licentious but enamoured youth was more than half inclined to answer in the affirmative, but the serious looks of his mistress induced him to frame a very different reply, and returning smiles chased the gathering clouds of disapprobation from her lovely brow.

At this period Sir Ludovic arrived at Naples, and soon became apprised of the inconstancy of Rinaldo, and of the death of his father. Curiosity and love almost tempted him to peruse the confidential let-

ters with which he was charged from Marenzi, but his firm principles of honour happily prevailed, and he faithfully destroyed them, in accordance with his promise. After refreshing his troops, he hastened to retrace his steps, the Emperor being dead, and to avail himself of the happy prospects, which Rinaldo's unprincipled conduct, opened to his view, and leaving a confidential emissary to watch the proceedings of the infatuated Count, he commenced his march for his own estates: but prudently determined, that the first account of her lover's treachery, should be imparted to Angelina, by other lips than his.

As many of the Milanese nobility were acquainted with Rinaldo's proceedings, and highly condemned his conduct, as unworthy the character of a true knight, Sir Michael soon became acquainted with all the circumstances, and storming with rage at the gross indignity offered to his daughter's reputation, by this shameful abandon-

ment of his engagements, he peremptorily commanded her to tear his unworthy image from her heart; and, impatient for the arrival of Sir Ludovic, resolved to admit him as his future son-in-law.

As months had elapsed since Rinaldo's departure, Fiorina had enjoyed constant opportunities of detracting from his merits, and weakening his hold on the affections of her mistress, at the same time promoting the interests of his rival, not by open praise of his superior virtues, but by actually blaming him; for when Angelina spoke favorably of Sir Ludovic's delicate conduct, a subject, which was frequently, but artfully introduced, by Fiorina herself, the waiting maid invariably combatted the opinions of her young mistress, and blamed his coldness of demeanour, declaring that had she been Sir Ludovic, she would have shewn more tenderness on an occasion, where her feelings had been so deeply wounded. In vain Angelina assured her, that it was precisely this absence of all appearance of

affection, which had won her esteem ; the more warmly the attendant urged her invectives, the more eagerly her mistress defended him ; then, after this display of affected dislike, to show her candour, she would mention some striking instance of his generosity of disposition.

When at length the news of Rinaldo's defection was fully confirmed, Angelina was more than half prepared to forget the unworthy object of her former affection ; but Sir Ludovic determined to allow, the first pain of disappointed love to subside, and to permit his mistress's mind to regain a healthy tone, before he endeavoured to lead it, into the channel he so ardently wished ; but all these resolutions proved useless, by the precipitate conduct of Marenzi, who in joining his daughter on the terrace, presented Ludovic as her future husband.

The sudden surprize threw them both into confusion, and some moments elapsed, before they recovered their self-possession :

if the bearing of the Knight on former occasions, had won her esteem, his present delicate and considerate forbearance, gave him new claims to her regard; and she felt assured, that her feelings would be spared, and her modesty not wounded by any precipitate declarations of love. On Marenzi now questioning him on the subject of Rinaldo's new passion, it was apparent to Angelina, that his answers were dictated with the wish to avoid causing her any unnecessary pain, and Ludovic rose at an early hour to bid his adieu, to allow his mistress to recover from the shock, which her father's unexpected command had occasioned her. He was followed by Marenzi, who desired a private conference.

“The late Count Lorenzo,” Marenzi said, “entered into a stipulation, that in the event of his son refusing to perform the contract of marriage, he should forfeit a considerable property in the Milanese, and it was also agreed on my part to forfeit an

equal proportion, should there be any obstacle opposed, on the part of my daughter, to this arrangement. It will be therefore necessary, should Rinaldo actually consummate his marriage with the Neapolitan lady, to take immediate possession of the territory in question; but then we must obtain correct information, before we adopt decisive measures."

Sir Ludovic replied, "My brother is at present detained at Naples on business, and has faithfully promised to forward every particular in regard to an event, which is likely to have such a deep effect on my future happiness. In the mean time I shall hold myself in readiness to support you on the receipt of any decisive intelligence."

Sir Ludovic did not avail himself of his new privileges, by intruding on Angelina's privacy, kindly permitting her to regain her composure, ere he urged his claim; but the history of a cruel deception, which had been practised on an innocent girl, by

Rinaldo, transpired at this moment, and proved effectual in chasing his image from her heart.

The Count, who was a passionate admirer of the fair sex, had been attracted by the beauty and simple elegance of Lucretia Monzani, the orphan daughter of the late Sir Alphonso of Chiusa, in the neighbourhood of Milan. He had encountered the maiden, at a grand fête given by the Podesta of Milan, and having been struck with her retiring charms, had paid her great attention during the three days which the entertainments lasted, and finally escorted her to her residence; which was a small castellated tower, with a moderate territory around. The comparative poverty, and unprotected nature of her situation, suggested the idea of obtaining his wishes on cheaper terms than those of marriage; but the virtuous indignation of the innocent girl, when at length she clearly understood his infamous intention, compelled him to declare that she had mistaken his

proposals, which were strictly honourable, but dreading that his father, who prided himself on his rank and extensive possessions, would not give his consent to the match, he had only suggested the propriety of making no public display on the occasion of the ceremony, but rather the prudence of concealing it, until his anger could be softened, which desirable object, her beauty and her virtues would soon effect.

Love is an able, but treacherous, advocate on these occasions, and her just fears being soon lulled into false security, Rinaldo was reinstated into favour, which was indeed by no means surprizing, as few men equalled the youthful Count in bodily and mental attractions. At this period he meditated the design of carrying her off to a small Castle, which his father had presented to him, in Piedmont, but then he feared the hot displeasure, not only of Lorenzo, but also of the Podesta of Milan, for whom Sir Alphonso had performed

eminent services, should he attempt such an unprincipled act. Nothing therefore remained, but to impose on the unfortunate Lucretia by a false marriage.

This latter plan was finally adopted, and carried into execution, and the unsuspecting victim gave a loose to her joy, in the arms of her unworthy seducer. She was now privately removed to his mountain castle, and as he continued to preserve all the outward shew of real affection, she was easily induced to remain in perfect seclusion, and considered the society of her adored husband, as preferable to all the dazzling splendours of Milan. But when his passion began to abate, and his attention assumed a colder character, his long and frequent absences, during the period he was paying his addresses to Angelina, caused considerable uneasiness in her mind, and his answers, when she questioned him on the cause of his neglect, soon confirmed her suspicions, that some mystery was attached to their union. But

her fears were again quieted by an artful display of fond attachment, a few days previous to his departure for Naples; for he was anxious to prevent any explosion for the present.

On the return, however, of the Piedmontese Barons from Naples, the report of Rinaldo's approaching marriage, with the beautiful Pauline, and his cruel and unmanly treatment of Angelina, gained general circulation, and reached the ears of the astonished Lucretia. Escaping from Piedmont, she fled to Milan, and claimed the protection and advice of her late father's friend, the worthy Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of that city.

Father Leo was well acquainted with her innocence, and pious disposition, and had always entertained a warm affection for her, and when she had so privately withdrawn from her own residence, had made every exertion to ascertain her fate, but without success; once indeed he heard, that a party of pleasure had been enjoying

the beautiful scenery of the lake of Como, and that the boat having been suddenly upset, by a violent gust of wind, a young lady, exactly answering the description of Lucretia, had been drowned, and the body interred at the nearest church. As this accident happened at the period of her disappearance, the worthy Abbot, in the absence of all certain information, rested satisfied with the identity, and mourned her untimely fate.

Months had elapsed, when a wounded man arrived at the gate of the Monastery, and in a faint voice demanded assistance; he was evidently in a dying state, and on food being offered him, and Father Stephen preparing to examine his wounds, he said, "I have more occasion for spiritual assistance, for my sins lay heavy on my conscience, and it will afford me some consolation to disclose them, as it may be the means of saving an innocent being from destruction." The good father having administered a cordial to enable him to proceed,

heard his confession, when, amongst various heinous delinquencies, he acknowledged having assumed, for a large bribe, the habit of a Monk, at Rinaldo's suggestion, and performed the ceremony of marriage between him and the unfortunate Lucretia; and also stated various other particulars of that atrocious deception, with the names of the principal actors.

The Abbot was made acquainted with this act of villainy, and was in deep meditation on the best means of ascertaining the retreat of the wretched victim, and thus rescuing her from the infamy of her present connection, when the unhappy girl herself appeared in his presence, to demand justice. The pretended Monk died that night, sincerely repenting of his crimes, and when Lucretia had recovered the fatigues of her rapid flight, the kind hearted Leo, in conjunction with the Abbess of the Convent, in which the poor girl had found a ready asylum, proceeded, with the greatest humanity and caution, to unfold the base

plan of artifice which had been practised on her innocent nature, (for as yet she was ignorant of the whole extent of his cruelty) but the shock proved too great for her delicate frame, and brought on premature labour; the infant, however, died within an hour of its birth, and the life of the mother long hung on a slender thread, but at length she was restored to her senses, and by the kind and persevering efforts of her friends, her health was re-established. The plan of her future life was soon determined, and settling her property on the Convent, she took the veil, and sought by penitence and prayer to wash out the stains of her unintentional sins. The circumstances of her cruel fate transpiring, excited general indignation against the execrable deceiver.

Angelina no longer hesitated to appear at table, and the attentions of Sir Ludovic became more warm, and were apparently well received. In a few days after the public exposure of Rinaldo's cruelty, his brother arriving, gave a description of the

Count's marriage with Pauline, at which he had attended with several of his friends, for the Marquis appeared anxious that the Nobles of that part of the country in which his son-in-law resided, should be witnesses of the event, as if he had some suspicion of his honour.

Marenzi made instant preparations for his daughter's marriage with Sir Ludovic, whose generous and delicate behaviour on all occasions, prevented his mistress making any affected objections for delay, and the event was celebrated with becoming pomp. Shortly afterwards, the troops of Marenzi and his son-in-law took quiet possession of the forfeited Estate of Rinaldo, the Podesta of Milan giving his decided sanction to the measure.

The Count of Chiavento arriving with his bride, at once perceived the impossibility of recovering his lost possession with his present numbers, and retired to Piedmont, with a full determination of being speedily revenged on his former friends. He first

contented himself with demanding the restitution of the lands in question, but meeting with a formal refusal, he appeared resigned to his loss, until expecting to find his enemies off their guard, he suddenly burst at the head of all his forces on their defenceless properties, and laid them waste with fire and sword; then rapidly retreated, before the noble owners could collect their troops. On another occasion, just as the harvest was ready for the sickle, he set fire to their crops, declaring that the whole country should be illuminated, in honour of the birth of Angelina's son; but he paid dearly for his pleasantry, for the gallant chiefs having received intimation of his designs, concealed themselves in ambush, and attacking him on his return, when laden with booty, nearly destroyed his whole force, and then ravaged his own territories to the very gates of his castle.

This disaster restrained him for some years, as he found great difficulty in recruiting his numbers, since he had squan-

dered the treasures amassed by his prudent father; at length he became so straightened in his circumstances, that he collected a numerous body of Banditti, and plundered the rich and unfortunate travellers in their passage over the Alps. At this period of his life, he was liberal as a paymaster, and bought golden opinions of his followers, until an event occurred which induced him to quit his native country for some years.

During the period of his splendour, when he was enabled to entertain a constant succession of company at Chiaveno, the fair Pauline was all gentleness, and submission; but when the means of supporting this round of gaiety were exhausted, and she was often left to the society of her own thoughts, and the gloom of the mountain scenery, she began to sigh for the light pleasures and the brilliant skies of her own dear Naples, and quietly resolved to embrace the earliest opportunity of quitting this mournful abode of poverty and pride.

To escape alone was out of the question, it was, therefore, necessary to select a proper companion for her flight; and no one appeared so likely to render the journey agreeable, as the young, and handsome Count of Masserano, who had frequently expressed the warmest admiration of her beauty, and talents; and had lately whispered, in the soft moment of passion, that had Nature produced two such fair creations, he too would have become a Benedict. The affair, when such feelings existed, was soon arranged to the mutual satisfaction of the parties; and the faithful wife bid a lasting adieu to the mansion of her excellent husband.

The scheme had been well concerted, during the absence of Rinaldo, on a predatory excursion to the defiles of the Alps, and many months elapsed, before he could divine the cause of her desertion, for she had never expressed the slightest dissatisfaction, at their late retired mode of life; but on the contrary had always received

him with smiles, on his return from either hunting, or plundering parties; but at length the continued absence of Count Masserano, without any ostensible object, and the recollection of his open admiration of his wife, suggested the solution of the mystery, and he determined to take a bloody revenge, at the earliest opportunity.

At a grand hunting match, about two years after the flight of Pauline, and shortly after the return of Masserano to his native country, Rinaldo contrived to keep close to his side, when a sudden violent thunder storm arising, the hunters were dispersed, and the two Counts were observed to ride off in company in quest of shelter. Rinaldo returned home alone in the evening; but as Masserano did not make his appearance, great fears were entertained for his safety, and parties were dispatched in every direction to search for him; and at length his murdered body was discovered, in a retired part of the forest. Violent suspicion consequently attached to Ri-

naldo, as the author of the deed, since he was the last seen in company with the unfortunate noble; though positive proof could not be produced against him, yet so great was the animosity of Masserano's relatives, and friends, in consequence of these suspicious circumstances, that they unanimously resolved to bring the supposed offender to public justice. The Count of Chiavento not relishing the threatening aspect of affairs, deemed it prudent to absent himself for some time, and leaving the brave and trusty Adalbert as Chatelain of his almost impregnable castle, marched towards Switzerland, at the head of a numerous corps of condottieri which he had lately collected.

CHAPTER II.

YEARS passed away and still Rinaldo returned not, though fame reported that he had entered the service of the powerful King of Bohemia ; at length when the remembrance of his evil deeds had almost faded from memory, a numerous corps was observed one evening at the termination of the spring, to ascend the lofty hill on which the Castle of Chiaveno was situated. Adalbert made every preparation against a sudden surprise ; the bridge was drawn up, the wall was manned, but the alarm at once ceased, when the gallant owner's standards were recognized. The gates were thrown open, and all was joy and merriment ; but there was no extravagance in their feasting, as the former libe-

ral turn of their leader's disposition had degenerated into an avaricious and parsimonious habit; his baronial tables no longer groaned under the load of the viands, and the hall no more resounded with the cheerful voices of its numerous guests; yet, when curtailing the expenses of his domestic establishment, he faithfully paid the stipulated wages to his numerous followers, and was considered just in the distribution of the plunder; in consequence, he was faithfully served, and recruits were ever eager to flock to the standard of a leader, equally distinguished for his courage and his talents, and whose conscience was ever ready to wink at their atrocities.

Fortune appeared to have showered her golden favours on him, during his long absence, for he returned laden with wealth, and was thus enabled to restore the dilapidations of Chiaveno; and he possibly might have regained the favourable opinion of the neighbouring nobility, had not his

insatiable love of gold led him to commit new atrocities. He had scarcely settled his affairs, which had become very deranged in consequence of his long absence, when new offers again tempted him to try the chances of war.

The Count of Regensburg having decided on collecting all his forces, naturally turned his thoughts on Rinaldo, with whose courage and talents he was well acquainted, and making the most liberal offers, prevailed on him to join his cause. When however the news of his infamous attack on the hospitable Lord of Greiffen, reached Piedmont, all hopes of any change in his morals, or principles, entirely vanished; and the animosity excited against him, on account of his former misdeeds, having been rekindled, a general confederacy, headed by the brother of the murdered Count of Masserano, was formed against him; and it was unanimously resolved to secure his person, on his return from Switzerland, as a disturber

of the public peace, on whom no confidence could be placed, and against whose open or secret attack, no person was secure.

His sudden return from Germany, and by an unexpected route, prevented the adoption of a plan to attack him on his descent of the Alps, and it became necessary to propose some other mode, for the idea of a regular assault on his stronghold, was out of the question, in consequence of its almost impregnable situation, and to endeavour to starve him out, would entail too heavy an expence, from the difficulty of ensuring regular supplies, for so large a force, in that barren part of the country. The leaders therefore determined to watch his movements, and seize the first opportunity of crushing him effectually.

Rinaldo soon discovered the state of the public feeling against him, from the haughty and cold reception, which he every where experienced, and driven to desperation, determined if he could prevail

on the politic Bertoldo to join him with his retainers, to subject the entire district to his power, and to dispossess the nobility of their lands and castles, either by fraud or force; and to levy contributions on all travellers, and merchandise. The grand difficulty of the plan, consisted in portioning Bertoldo's share of power, as he was well aware of his ambitious character, and that he would scarcely admit of a superior; but he soon thought of a happy expedient, to obviate all discontent on the mind of the Abbot, by surprising the Castle of Orvieto, which boasted nearly equal strength with Chiaveno itself, and commanded the pass into the fertile valley, which formed the territory of its owner; once in his possession, he proposed to settle it on Bertoldo as his property and place of residence, from whence they might carry their united plans into execution, with greater facility and success. As to the justice of the measure, that was of little consequence, for as the Barons

seemed resolved to destroy him, he considered it justifiable on his part to adopt every means necessary, for his own preservation.

At length the wished-for moment came, and the worthy Abbot presented himself at Chiaveno, in no very amiable mood, in consequence of the unpromising aspect of his affairs; for though the Cardinal had promised him his interest, in obtaining some new preferment, still he held out very little hopes of his being restored to his former situation, as a particular friend of the present Pope, had been appointed to fill the vacancy. When, therefore Rinaldo unfolded his designs, the Abbot eagerly embraced the proposal, on the express condition, that Orvieto should be delivered to him, on its capture; that the plunder should be equally divided, the chief command alternately exercised, and that no treaty should be concluded without their mutual consent.

These preliminaries having been amica-

bly adjusted, the two worthies immediately formed a plan for the surprise of Orvieto. Having selected a chosen body of men, and divided them into three unequal divisions, the strongest under the Abbot marched from Chiavento in the evening, for the purpose of occupying some woody ground, in the immediate vicinity of the castle; the two remaining, directed by Rinaldo, marched at a later hour, so as to arrive at day break in the valley; the weakest party immediately commenced driving the cattle, whilst the other concealed itself behind some rocks. The peasantry made no resistance against such a superior force, but a strong detachment hastening from the castle, soon rallied the flying serfs, and made an attack on the marauders; the division in ambush now rushed out, and would have easily overpowered it, had not the Baron, (imagining that he had secured the robbers in a net) marched with his whole disposable force to cut off their retreat, whilst the

few remaining soldiers of the garrison, moved a short distance in advance, to support their friends, if necessary ; it was then that the Abbot at the head of his formidable corps, springing from his lurking place, rushed on this feeble remnant, and entered the gates with them, where, having secured his prey, he dispatched assistance to his comrade. The Lord of Orvieto after a desperate defence, was killed in the contest, and the greater part of his retainers shared his fate. The survivors entered into the service of their new master who immediately assumed the title. The daughter of the Baron became the prize of the conqueror. Rinaldo according to the previous agreement, received half of the plunder, and a liberal donation was made to the troops on the occasion.

This untoward event filled the whole country with consternation, and finally determined them to make the most vigo-

rous exertions to repress the increasing power of this daring man.

Every measure of precaution was taken by Bertoldo to ensure the safety of his new acquisition, and being a man of sound judgment, and of perfect command of temper, he soon conciliated the affections of the peasantry, on the extensive estates of Orvieto, by his liberality, and with their assistance improved the already strong works of his castle. Having regulated every thing which related to his internal security, he now turned his thoughts to Rome, in order to secure the powerful protection of the Papal Government. For this purpose he dispatched a confidential emissary with full powers to treat. To his friend Leanato, and his more powerful brother the Secretary, he proposed a liberal share of the spoil; and offered to do homage for the fiefs. This was a great temptation, as the Papal See endeavoured to extend its territorial influence on all occasions: and Bertoldo, who of course

told a plausible tale of the mode by which he acquired this rich possession, was confirmed in the enjoyment of it: Gregory himself, who was a moderate and humane man, being kept in happy ignorance of the dark shades of the story, by his artful and ambitious secretary.

Bertoldo sinking his religious character for one more adapted to his disposition, proposed to marry the daughter of the late lord; and the consent of the lady was easily obtained, as she was a prisoner, and was probably glad of repairing her wounded honour, by this outward mark of respect. Every thing seemed to prosper with these finished rogues, as they constantly succeeded in enlarging their already extensive possessions, by the fall of some neighbouring castle. But though vengeance sometimes sleepeth, yet it is kindled in an instant, and the hour of retribution appears like a sudden whirlwind when least expected.

CHAPTER III.

As all combined opposition to their measures, had now apparently ceased, Rinaldo turned his attention to Sir Ludovic, and his accomplished partner, and viewing with jealousy and hatred, the state of innocent happiness in which they lived at Marenzi, (for the old Count had died the preceding year), he resolved to disturb, if not destroy, their tranquillity by his insidious arts; but smarting under the recollection of his former defeat, he was by no means desirous of encountering the vengeance of the Baron in the open field. Meditating on the easiest and most effectual means of accomplishing his diabolical intentions, he penned an epistle to Angelina, couched in the warmest strains of

love, entreating her to appoint another meeting, for the renewal of their sweet intercourse, and again steep his senses in all the joys of Elysium; and concluded with the happy intelligence, that success had at last attended his efforts, in obtaining the ornaments she desired, and trusted that she would ever employ him in these delicate commissions, in preference to the poor easy dupe, who was unworthy of her smiles.

By means of a large bribe, he contrived to have the ornaments placed in the cabinet, which contained her jewels, and the letter thrown in such a situation, that it must inevitably meet the eye of her husband. Sir Ludovic observing the letter on the ground took it up, and reading the passionate terms of the direction, was at a loss to guess, who could be authorized to address his wife, with such warmth and freedom. His suspicion and curiosity induced him to open it, and peruse the contents; but what words can express, the

agonized feelings of the husband's mind, when the foul breath of slander attempted to sully the fair fame of his adored Angelina? At first he rejected the infamous imputation with indignation, as the base calumny of an envious scoundrel; but when he reflected, on the evident pleasure with which, she had formerly received Rinaldo's addresses, and the impassioned but chastened fire of her languishing eye, as her lover approached her; and when memory painted in glowing colours, those jealous feelings of disappointed love, with which he had often viewed, the many tender endearments, which their betrothed state permitted, he could not entirely root the hateful idea from his mind, "that the villain's boast might yet be true"—then again, the sincerity, the fondness, the confidence of Angelina towards him, from the hour in which she first gave her hand at the altar, all crowded on his brain to overwhelm the base supposition. Yet lurking jealousy would again raise her hideous

head, and goad him on to phrenzy. He read the hateful witness of his shame, o'er and o'er again, but each perusal, only tended to increase his belief, of the possibility of Angelina's fall from virtue.

Smothering the hateful passion in his bosom, and affecting the calmness of a slumbering volcano, he eagerly sought his wife's apartment, and dismissing her attendants, at once began to unfold the purport of his visit. Angelina had half risen to receive him, with an encouraging smile, but remarking the malignant expression of his eye, and the unusual rudeness of his manner, she again sank trembling on the couch, waiting in breathless anxiety the issue of this event.

“What does my dear Lord demand, has any dreadful misfortune assailed him?”

“You should be more careful, Lady, methinks, of these tender tokens of unhallowed love; they may become dangerous weapons in an enraged husband's hands.”

“My dearest Ludovic, you alarm me

with your violence; have not years of pure and sincere affection been sufficient to protect me from any injurious, or light suspicion?"

"Do you call this light, Madam?" thundered out her husband, at the same time throwing the crumpled letter to her. "Read it, Madam, read it; the contents may prove sweeter to you, than to me."

Trembling with apprehension, but with a fortitude and calmness, which conscious innocence alone can give, Angelina perused the letter, whilst the blush of offended delicacy tinged her pallid cheeks.

Ludovic, who had fixed his eagle eye, as if he would read the inmost thoughts of her soul, exclaimed—"Well may the remembrance of your acts, call the blush of shame to your guilty countenance."

"Ludovic!" replied his injured wife, "you will repent this ungenerous observation: for surprizing indeed would it be, if my countenance did not speak the language of modesty, when perusing such

indelicate allusions. You have ever found me firm, yet gentle, in that course of conduct, which my judgment, and affection, assured me was the best; and whatever your sentiments and determination may be, I here solemnly declare, that no consideration shall induce me, to live under so base an imputation, when deprived of my husband's confidence in my truth and virtue. Ludovic! I have loved you with devotion, and you have hitherto repaid my passion, with equal sincerity. I love you even now, when writhing under the charge of a crime, which my pure soul abhors; but I love my honour dearer than life itself; and if I am not permitted to enjoy the first, I will no longer retain the other."

This spirited and dignified address, carried such a conviction of truth with it, as at once to calm the fury of the Knight, and induce him to discuss the affair with more moderation. Angelina herself proposed that her cabinet should be examined, sensibly observing, that the means, which

had procured the reception of the letter, had also probably introduced the ornaments at the same time. The fatal drawer was opened, and a new and splendid pair of bracelets met the intense looks of Sir Ludovic. First a scarlet flush, then the paleness of death, overspread his countenance; his pale lips parted; it appeared as if a Basilisk had fixed its deadly gaze on him.—Angelina had taken her seat, at the moment the drawer was opened, and appeared intently examining the wicked letter, when suddenly a gleam of awakened delight, flushed over her expressive face, as springing from her seat, she exclaimed—

“Joy, joy, my dearest husband! the villain has outwitted himself. Read, read, he names Thursday as the day on which he falsely asserts, that I dishonoured myself. You may remember, that we passed that, and the four following days, at Milan, to celebrate the nuptials of Count Valfi’s daughter.” And she threw her delicate arm round her husband’s neck, and wept

in all the excess of recovered happiness. The repentant Ludovic was silent, but the vehemence with which he kissed the burning tears from her eyes, and pressed her trembling form to his bosom, spoke more truly than words, to her heart, the triumph of Innocence. The fiendish letter, and its accompanying bracelets were trampled into dust, and from that day, to the hour of his death, the gallant Ludovic never for an instant doubted, the truth and purity of his incomparable wife. Other attempts were made, but were only treated with silent, and deserved contempt. But the hour of punishment rapidly approached.

The audacity of the two Predatory Chiefs increasing with their continued success, a league was formed between the Piedmontese and Milanese Nobles, to which Sir Ludovic acceded. The first step was to acquaint the Pope with the real character of Bertoldo's proceedings, and being satisfied of the truth of the statements, he revoked all his grants, cancelled

the marriage of the Countess of Orvieto, and issued an order to Sir Ludovic, as commander of the allied forces, to take possession of the Castle, and re-instate the Countess in her rights; but lest the unhappy lady should suffer in consequence of these decrees, they were not to be published, until the moment of success.

Rinaldo and his associate, elated with their fortune, had made some unjustifiable demands on Sir Albert of Venula, near Biela, and in consequence of his refusal to comply, had collected all their forces, and marched with the intention of punishing him, for his temerity, and, as they proudly boasted, of striking a salutary terror into the surrounding country.

Availing themselves of this favourable opportunity, Sir Ludovic crossed the Tessino, and by secret and rapid marches, joined the confederates in the rear of the besieging force; having secured all the passes, to prevent their return to the mountains, the main body advanced, and the

garrison of Venula sallying at the same time, the marauders were completely defeated, despite an obstinate resistance. Rinaldo fell by the hand of Sir Ludovic, and Bertoldo having fled from the field, was closely pursued to the hills, where finding escape impossible, as his enemies were at his heels, he made a desperate effort to leap a deep chasm, but failed in the hardy attempt, and his pursuers saw his body crashing the dried pine branches, as it tumbled from tree to tree in its fearful descent to the abyss below. Rinaldo was suspended by the heels to a lofty tree, in front of his own Castle, and the victors summoning both Chiaveno and Orvieto to surrender, were instantly admitted, and found in the accumulated treasures, sufficient to repay them for their toils, and to satisfy all just demands.

CHAPTER IV.

MATILDA and Emmeline had as usual repaired to the noble terrace, when the declining sun enabled them to enjoy the cool and refreshing shade. Flying reports had announced the capitulation of the Count of Regensburg, and the return of the army; no authentic information, however, had as yet been received, but the approach of the Count of Hapsburg was hourly expected, and the sisters occasionally regarded the distant wood, from which the troops would first emerge; there was a restlessness in Matilda's manner, so natural in a young maiden in her situation, that often raised a smile in Emmeline's countenance, and seeing her sister frequently stop, at the bottom of the terrace, and regard the distant woods of Grunengen, she asked—

“What alterations do you intend to make?”

“What do you mean my love? Matilda replied.”

When Emmeline, looking as if she had made some mistake,

“Is not then Sir Ernest, the Lord of Grunengen?”

Matilda blushed as she turned from the scene, and said,

“True! but then I am not yet mistress of the domain, and perhaps never shall be,” sighing deeply at the moment.

“My sweetest sister, what a happy facility you possess of viewing objects darkly! one would have imagined that the brilliant sun, gilding with its rays the richly variegated tops of your future forests, would have raised corresponding thoughts in your mind, in unison with the splendid scene; but perhaps you heard the solemn owl hooting from his solitary abode, during the still hours of the last night, and your disturbed dreams painted Ernest, unfaith-

ful to his vows, but pardon, my odious memory is treacherous; contending with the Pope about the Abbey of Hildesheim."

"For once, fairest Astrologer, you have mistaken the aspect of the stars. My thoughts were engaged on the approaching change in my situation, and it is a subject surely worthy of some moments serious reflection, knowing how short-sighted we are, and ignorant of what is likely to constitute our real happiness; and though from my intimate acquaintance with dear Ernest's disposition, I may securely anticipate future joy: yet marriage is a great lottery, and men very often place a high value, on what is not in their possession, but when once obtained, their admiration soon fades, and the real merits of the bauble are undervalued; for the pleasures of the imagination, are more vivid than those of reality."

"My dearest philosopher, you almost frighten the ideas of wedlock out of my brain; since you, with your thinking mind,

and calculating choice, consider the prospect of future happiness, as a mere matter of chance, what may I expect with all my giddiness? reflection will not enter much into my selection."

"If you describe my opinion on marriage correctly, the giddy and the prudent will be on an equality; but this I sincerely think, if you obtain what you deserve, it will be a husband worthy of your merits."

"As regards myself, there would be no great difficulty in the selection, but according to my estimate of your pretensions, the whole world could not produce an object really deserving of your virtues."

The tear of genuine affection glistened like a dew drop in the eyes of the sisters, as they tenderly embraced.*

On resuming their walk, the faint sound of a distant horn fell on their ear, and ever and anon, was repeated louder and louder;

* The affections of females towards each other are very warm and romantic in Germany.

at length, on attentively observing the forest, a dark and indistinct mass began to emerge from it, and their joy was soon increased, when the courier announced the welcome tidings of the approach of the gallant and victorious train. All was now joy, and busy preparation through the castle, the festive board was hospitably spread to receive the long absent guests. Numbers crowded to the ramparts, overlooking the grand gate of entrance, anxious to catch the first view of returning relatives and friends. Many an aged, many a youthful face exhibited the intense anxiety of doubt and hope, and as the enquiring eye traced the well known features, a pleasurable smile lighted up the face with beaming joy ; but again the mournful look, the fast falling tear, plainly indicated that the enquiry had not proved satisfactory to all : but when the warrior train entered the heavy portal, the delighted crowd rushed, to meet the warm embrace of their husbands, and lovers, whilst some few, with

tottering steps, and bereft of hope, slowly advanced to learn the confirmation of their fears.

The lately deserted and almost silent hall, again resounded with the lute and song, whilst many a happy dame hung in breathless attention on the words of her lover and husband, as he recorded all the dangers of the well fought field, and tracing the movements and positions on the table with his finger dipped in wine, said, "Here the Count of Hapsburg was unhorsed; there the terrible beams of wood, with the crumbling tower, carried death and misery in their fall; there the mighty Sir Otho felt the power of Hugo's sword; near this the Count of Tockenbourg surrendered to his more fortunate opponent; and where danger pressed Sir Rodolph ever appeared. Question followed question; and the smile, and furtive glance of the approving maiden, repaid the brave warrior for all his toils.*

* Ovid.

But amidst the general joy, the Lady Ethelinda sat absorbed in melancholy, for the scene forcibly recalled to her mind, the fate of the murdered Sir Herman; for he too, had not the assassin's steel cut him off in the flower of his age, would have minutely detailed the interesting events of the siege, whilst the grateful hearts of his auditory would have swelled with joy at his safe return; but fate had willed it otherwise. Yet, when she reflected on the mercies she had experienced, in escaping from the power of the marauders, and that she was not solitary in her misfortunes, for many a widowed heart was at this moment grieving over the loss of the husband of her choice; many a sister, also, was lamenting over the early death of her affectionate brother, her only protector against the storms and temptations of an evil world; she repented of her thoughts, and offered up a silent prayer to that merciful Providence, which could supply the place of husband and father, and give her strength to bear

all the heavy trials of life. Sir Rodolph, too, had shewn the kindness of a father, and had faithfully promised, to reinstate her immediately in her Castle of Greiffen, and act as the guardian of her daughters, until the marriage of Matilda to Sir Ernest, should provide them a noble and legal protector of their interests. At the same time, he strongly recommended their remaining, until that ceremony was performed, at Hapsburg, since the times were too turbulent, to trust themselves at Greiffen, in their present widowed and orphan state. Possessing that happy and intuitive sagacity, which enabled him to unbend, and suit his manners to the occasion, he kindly whispered Matilda, that he had invited a youthful and gallant Knight, to visit him on the following day, and hoped she would join in endeavouring to amuse, and to detain him for some time. The maiden promised to exert her utmost efforts, as the Count so particularly requested it. "And, my pretty Emmeline," continued Sir Ro-

dolph, "we must make a Knight of Sir Ernest's Squire, for the youth is undoubtedly well born, and handsome, and brave enough, for any fair lady's love." Emmeline looked a little conscious, as if she agreed in opinion, as the Count led her mother from the festive board.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER Clement was in waiting, to receive Sir Ernest on his return from the field, and being admitted to a private conference, detailed the particulars of his embassy; presuming on his long friendship with the late Baron, and the parental regard which he entertained for the son, he earnestly entreated him, calmly to consider the danger of his present opposition to the Holy See, at the same time, pointing out the inutility; for even the mighty Frederic,* with his splendid talents, great military experience, and formidable power, was finally compelled to bow with submission to the haughty commands of the

* Historical.

reigning Pontiff. “ You know not, my son, the power of the Church, if it cannot with its terrific thunder, at once overthrow the opposing object, it proceeds like a gentle water course, which imperceptibly undermines the lofty bank, on which some noble edifice is situated, until having silently effected the destruction of its foundations, the mass falls with a sudden, and unexpected crash ! At present your opposition has produced no threatening display of power ; but Gregory, from the natural gentleness of his disposition, though averse to harsh measures, is not the less firm in his determinations ; and you will too late discover, that after this long calm, a storm will suddenly arise, which it will be impossible to allay. Permit me, then, to persuade you to adopt the following compromise—allow the Pope to nominate to the abbey, on condition, that should any individual of your family wish to enter the ecclesiastical profession, he shall be appointed in preference to all

other candidates, and receive the confirmation of his Holiness."

Sir Ernest, in reply, observed, "I have long respected your judgment, and been sensible of your affection, and there is no man whose advice I would sooner follow ; but in this instance, I must make a decided opposition, for your own arguments supply me with a defence ; since by yielding in the slightest degree, and affording an inlet for the Church to creep in, it will gradually undermine my property, and then swallow up the whole."

"True, my son, the Church, like a rivulet, may proceed by gentle sap, but it may at once rush like a mighty torrent, and overwhelm all in its furious passage : for the Pope at this moment reigns paramount, his will is law ; and should you provoke him to proceed to extremities, how will you support the terrible sentence of excommunication ? granted that you despise the threat, will your retainers entertain the same opinion ? will they not

tremble at the wrath of God's vicegerent ? and possibly even hesitate to acknowledge your authority, and have you reflected, my son ? that they may even refuse to hold any communion with you."

" The picture you have drawn, my good father, is indeed alarming ; but I very much doubt the truth of your predictions, and suspect, that the thunder of his Holiness would fall harmless on my head, and on those of my hardy retainers, who would sooner fight than fear the Pope, when opposed to the interests of their leader ; and it will be time enough to submit, when reduced to the last extremity."

" You deceive yourself, my son, remember Sir Rodolph ! remember the Count of Hapsburg* was obliged to serve against the heathen Russians, before he could obtain the revocation of the sentence of excommunication, passed against him, for burning a Nunnery, by accident, at Basle ;

* Historical.

and you will readily allow, that Rodolph is not a man to be frightened at an imaginary phantom. There is yet one argument remaining, which is most likely to influence your decision—would the Lady Matilda, entertaining as she does, the strictest ideas of the sanctity, and authority of the head of the Church, consent to unite her destiny with a man placed under the curse of excommunication? but supposing she were weak enough to consent, what priest would dare to perform the marriage ceremony?”

“You have indeed justly named the strongest argument, and I should readily bow to the orders of Gregory, could I for an instant believe, that Matilda could possibly betray such amazing weakness, as to desert the man to whom she has pledged her faith, at the imperious mandate of an ambitious plunderer; I have more confidence in her integrity, and good sense.”

“My son,” meekly replied the Monk, “if you do not respect the Pope, on your

own account, at least do so on mine, and speak with more reverence of your spiritual sovereign."

The youthful knight stood rebuked, and taking the old man's hand, kindly said—

"My heart smites me, for giving you a moment's pain, and I sincerely demand your pardon for the intemperate expression; and though I cannot follow your advice in this instance, yet, believe me, I feel your kindness, in so deeply interesting yourself in my welfare; and if my judgment proves incorrect, and the misfortunes which you predict, should come upon me, I shall then most willingly fly to you, and entreat your mediation with the Pope: in the mean time, if his Holiness is satisfied, with receiving the Baron of Ustar's homage, the matter may rest as it is, and I shall not notice this act in a public manner; but should the summons, to which you allude, actually arrive, I shall resolutely refuse to obey, and shall treat it with the contempt, and indignation it so richly deserves."

“One word at parting, my son, I am not only the physician of the soul, but of the body also, and Matilda is a delicate plant, her health has suffered materially from her late hardships, both of body and mind. Any intense uneasiness and agitation, may be attended with fatal effects—adieu.” The youth shuddered as the old Monk sorrowfully withdrew, too truly contemplating the unhappy results, likely to arise from this obstinate, and vain determination to oppose a power, far beyond human means to control.

Sir Ernest attended by Hugo, proceeded after the conference, to Hapsburg Castle, but the train of melancholy ideas, which the last observations of the confessor had awakened, were soon dissipated on viewing the brilliant, and apparently healthy countenance of his love, whom he contrived to withdraw from the circle: unwilling on their first meeting, to introduce such a disagreeable subject, as his dispute with the Pope, he studiously concealed

the purport of the conference, which he had so recently held with Father Clement, and talked only of his approaching nuptials, fondly urging Matilda to name an early day; but whilst acknowledging her love, she still deprecated this unseemly haste, and all that his utmost entreaties could obtain, was the promise of uniting her fate with his, early in the spring. Highly enchanted at the prospect of his happiness, being thus definitely arranged, the youthful lover indulged in all those anticipations of bliss, which might never be realised, projected improvements, and then discussed their detail, and fondly hoped, that the elegant taste of his lovely bride, would soon render the domain of Grunengen a perfect paradise, and declared that she should be the Goddess of his idolatry; that peace should reign throughout the land, and that the brasen notes of the trumpet, should be exchanged for the sweet breathings of the lute.

“How long, dear Ernest,” Matilda

asked, “ will this rhapsody last? men are so fickle, and so fond of tumult, that your imaginary goddess will not long be worshipped; and the blast of the horn will soon overpower the sound of the lute, and the shepherd’s crook be exchanged for the spear. We are living certainly in an Arcadian country, but crops of steel alone prevail, and the first summons to the battle field, will banish all peaceful notions from my high-priest, and send him forth, as the gallant redresser of wrongs.”

“ If assured of your smiles, my sweetest love, no temptation shall induce me to quit, the romantic groves of my own happy Grunengen; except indeed to join a sister spirit, midst the hills and lakes of Greiffen; but I fear me, that the beautiful fairy, will not long bless that happy spot with her presence, but be transported to some other clime, by an adventurous Knight.”

“ Alas! poor women! we are goddesses before we resign our liberty to the iron rule of man; our future prospects are

touched with a painter's hand, in all the vivid colours of a heated imagination; our charms, and actions, are covered with the transparent veil of taste and elegance; but possession soon dissolves the spell, the poetic vision vanishes, and leaves not a wreck behind, but the dull reality. Our mighty lord and master descends from his stilts, and clearing the mist from his eyes, is surprized to find, that all has been a deceptive dream."

"You are unjust, my Matilda, and reverse the scene; for hitherto I have only considered you as woman, but when that happy day arrives, I shall discover you to be a goddess; and, instead of terminating, your true reign will only then commence."

"You are all alike, flatterers of us poor women; you lull us into a false delusion, by offering incense to our vanity, a passion which we invariably condemn in others, but excuse in our own persons."

"My sweetest love, until this instant, I never thought you satirical. You certainly

have no reason to complain of flattery, for considering you superior to such idle feeling, I have abstained from paying you those compliments, which most women receive, and certainly expect from their lovers, particularly if they only boast of personal and not mental charms; but you, who are so rich in both, and are so highly exalted above the ordinary level of women of rank, would have resented any attempt on my part, to feed you with this common place adulation."

"Indeed, Ernest," replied Matilda, smiling, "you are an excellent advocate, and richly merit my thanks, for your arguments are all in support of my observations, and your last remarks deserve to be published, for the benefit of all future lovers, as a perfect specimen of the art of flattery."

"Is this like your usual candour, dearest Matilda? Can truth be termed flattery?"

“Certainly! when truth is too highly coloured, and exaggerated.”

“I have hitherto only spoken in prose,” replied Ernest, “but when my imagination becomes excited, and I proclaim your praises in the warm language of poetry, as the shepherds of old, what will you then term, these just tributes to your perfections?”

“Rhapsodies! my dear Ernest, of an Enthusiast; and I shall send for Father Clement to exorcise the false spirit.”

“How then will you permit me to express my love?”

“In simple sincerity.”

“But if I transgress this rule of moderation?”

“You know my disposition is very merciful, and you may therefore expect pardon on repentance.”

“My sins, I fear, will demand it very often, my own Matilda.”

“Remember! I shall only be inclined

to forgive a truly repentant sinner, provided he does not wilfully transgress my commands, and only occasionally allows his vivid imagination, to master his sober reason."

The enamoured youth stole a sweet kiss from the lips of his beautiful mistress, and at once learnt, that he would in future experience considerable difficulty in obtaining pardon, for what she termed wilful and serious offences. Her delicate cheek still exhibited the deepest shade of the rose, as Emmeline joined them, and announced the arrival of a courier from Lauffenbourg, with dispatches, containing, as she surmised, disastrous news, for the Count on perusing it, had uttered some indignant expressions, and his manner displayed the highest excitement, as he retired to his cabinet, with Sir Frederic of Ustar, who had arrived at the moment. The Courier had dropt some hints of a tumult during the Tournament, occasioned by the intrigues of the Bishop and the citizens of

Bâsle. Matilda experienced deep regret at this news, for she truly feared that it would again cause their painful separation. Anxious to obtain the particulars of the affair, they hastened direct to the castle.

CHAPTER VI.

As the trio ascended the steps of the terrace, they observed a tall youth conversing earnestly with a lady, and the subject seemed so interesting, that they did not appear to notice their approach. Ernest at once declared it was Hugo; but Emmeline with great warmth denied it, asserting that the Squire was not acquainted intimately with any lady; "besides he is of a very retiring and modest disposition, where females are concerned."

"My dearest Sister," replied Ernest, with mock humility, "you must pardon my error, not being aware, that you were so deeply interested in my Squire's proceedings, or were so well acquainted with his disposition and feelings."

The burning blushes of the conscious girl demanded mercy, and the good-natured youth affecting to point to some object in the park, called Matilda's attention to it, to enable Emmeline to resume her composure. She had long admired Hugo, and he was indeed worthy of her utmost admiration; and the noble services which he had performed for her mother and sister, had softened those feelings of regard, into the more tender passion of love, which yet slumbered in her bosom, until suddenly awakened into life, at thus observing him in apparent intimate communication with another female. Her mind was too pure, to entertain the hateful feelings of jealousy, in all its intensity, but still the sudden surprize, had excited an unpleasant sensation in her heart, distantly allied to this tormenting plague, and at the first mention of his name by Ernest, the bare supposition of his attentions to another woman, appeared so improbable, that she instantly, without even looking at the object, denied

its truth; although the moment after, the quick eye of love convinced her of the truth of his observation.

As they advanced, the forms of Hugo and Blanche stood confessed, and the heightened colour of the maiden, as she started in evident surprize at their greeting, for she had not observed their approach, shewed that either the subject of conversation, or her companion himself, had engaged all her attention. The lady had the advantage, for in the affectionate embrace of her friend Matilda, she soon recovered her confusion; but the gentleman was not so fortunate, for whether guilty or innocent, he had to endure the freezing scorn of his indignant mistress, whilst Sir Ernest had great difficulty in restraining his laughter. Yet Hugo had reason to congratulate himself, for this was the first evident proof, of the gentle Emmeline's feelings towards him, which enabled him to bear his unpleasant situation with tolerable fortitude, and he was greatly relieved, when

Blanche disengaging herself from the arms of Matilda, sought the embrace of her sister, who, to do her justice, was more likely to receive than impart warmth by the contact.

And now Sir Ernest indulged his malicious pleasantry, for attaching himself to Matilda and Blanche, he left Emmeline to be escorted by Hugo. At first the lady advanced in freezing dignity, and if she condescended to answer, it was only in monosyllables. In vain the youth touched on all subjects, remarked that her sister appeared to have recovered her health, that her mother evidently was in better spirits. This interesting topic, on all other occasions had been alluring and inexhaustible, but now the only answer and that with difficulty extracted, was, "time makes great alterations," with an indignant look at Blanche. The youth made many other efforts, with equal success, and when they had reached the end of the terrace, exclaimed with a tone of irritation, "I hope we

shall soon have war again; the maiden started, and exclaimed "I hope,"—when checking herself, she again was silent. The miserable youth was anxious to make some observations regarding his conversation with Blanche, but his timidity, and the fear that she might overhear the words, and consider it a breach of confidence, withheld him.

They had now entered the long gallery, which led to the ladies apartments, where as the gentlemen were about to retire, Blanche held out her hand to Hugo, which he pressed to his lips with affected tenderness. The blood mounted again to Emmeline's forehead; the tear glistened in her humid eye, as she turned to conceal her burning thoughts. Sir Ernest with great warmth congratulated Hugo on his good fortune, for the impression which he had made on Emmeline's heart was too apparent to escape observation, and promised that he should have every opportunity of gaining his spurs, the next time they were

engaged in combat; lamenting, at the same time, that the Count of Hapsburg had not knighted him, for his gallant conduct, in the last sortie from Regensberg, where he had richly merited it; and assuring him, that he would himself confer the golden spurs, should Sir Rodolph, who was very cautious in bestowing this honour, not grant it.

“ But you must be cautious, Sir Squire, in the mean time, and not expect to manage two beautiful girls at the same moment.”

“ I assure you, Sir Knight, the meeting with the Lady Blanche was purely accidental, and the subject regarded the lady alone. I was fortunately enabled to give her the information she demanded, and which relieved her mind of great apprehensions, regarding the safety of a friend, for whom she entertains a high regard. As to engaging with two ladies, I can assure you there is no danger, having so lately experienced the impossibility of managing one.”

“ If this is the purport of the conversa-

tion, the lady will soon be appeased, and will be more tractable on another occasion, as women are fond of imparting the secrets of the heart, in confidence to each other; but we will now join the Count, and ascertain the particulars of the late affair, at the Castle of Lauffenbourg."

When the ladies had retired, Blanche, who was of the same age with Emmeline, and had always lived in habits of the greatest affection with her, was surprised to meet with such a cold reception, so unlike the usual conduct of her friend, and unable to divine the cause of her displeasure, she threw her arm round her neck in a playful manner, and said, "Why grieves my liege lady? has her vassal committed aught against her majesty? Ah! I fear me the crime is unpardonable, the sky is still lowering; ah! that the sun would chase this gloom away, and illumine the brilliant surface with its rays."

"My dearest Blanche, I am not conscious of treating you with coldness, but

we are wayward creatures, and cannot always command our smiles; and, despite our utmost efforts, melancholy will sometimes steal over our hearts, and sadden our deceitful countenances, for deceitful mine must be, if it indicates aught but love, for my sweet friend."

"This is like my own Emmeline again, and now that I have obtained a kind listener, I will impart all my late griefs, and my present happiness, for indeed Hugo has relieved my heart from a load of misery and apprehension." The gloom on Emmeline's countenance again returned at the mention of this name, but Blanche imagining it arose from feelings of interest on her account, tenderly observed, "let me chase these tears away my love, for I have little to fear; my prospects are again cheered by returning hope: Hugo having assured me of my Arnould's safety."

Emmeline assuming an unconcerned look, innocently asked,

"Has Hugo lately imparted this agreeable information.?"

“ I was listening to his narration, when you joined us so unexpectedly on the terrace, and the subject so deeply interested me, that I did not perceive your approach.”

“ I was not aware that any thing serious had happened to Sir Arnould of Tockenburg.”

“ I have been in a state of despair,” replied Blanche, “ for report stated that my Arnould had fallen by the hand of Sir Ernest, and my father has been so enraged with the Count of Tockenburg and his son, in consequence of their alliance with the Lord of Regensberg, that I did not dare demand information from him, so that you may conceive my joy, when Hugo kindly relieved my suspense; and if my heart were not so deeply engaged to another, I could almost fall in love with him, for his agreeable news.”

Returning smiles again played on the lovely features of Emmeline, and if her friend had reason to complain of her previous coldness, she now received ample compen-

sation in the most endearing caresses. Aware of her unkind conduct to the innocent Hugo, she was now most anxious to repair her injustice, and dissipate the unpleasant feelings occasioned by her harshness: And when the two joined the party in the evening, Hugo was soon attracted to her side, by her approaching smiles, and lost the remembrance of her recent displeasure, in the enjoyment of the undisguised partiality which she evinced towards him.

Sir Ernest now approached them, and Matilda at once discovered, from the gravity of his countenance, that some unpleasant news had arrived; which apprehension was soon confirmed, as the Knight related, that the Count of Hapsburg had determined on proceeding in person to the Princely Abbot of St. Gallen, and doing homage for the fiefs, which he held under him; to arrange the dispute at once, and thus be at liberty to march against the town and Bishop of Basle.

“ Though I have at his earnest request, promised to support him with my retainers, yet grieve not, my love, since I trust that the affair will soon be terminated, and that our success will enable me to return before the appointed time, when all my wishes will be crowned with bliss.”

Then turning to Emmeline he continued,

“ And I trust that fortune, in one of her favourable moods, will permit Sir Rodolph to send back another noble Knight, to swear fealty to some fair damsel of this mountain region.”

Matilda replied, “ We shall all be grateful to the Count for his kind intentions, and will offer up our prayers for his success.—Is the time, however, fixed for your departure? ”

“ To-morrow we shall be permitted to devote to your service, but the following day I fear will see us on our route; but the lateness of the hour warns us to retire, and may guardian angels protect you till we meet again.”

The sisters retired to their apartment, and it was a relief to Emmeline, to unburthen the secrets of her heart, to her beloved Matilda. Reposing her blushing face on her sister's bosom, the gentle girl confessed the tender feelings, which the morning scene had kindled into being, and with a hesitating voice demanded, if she had betrayed her secret.

“It would be uncandid, my sweet sister, were I to deny, that both Ernest and myself observed your partiality for Hugo, but Blanche, I am confident was so engaged with her own affairs, that she paid no regard to your tell-tale countenance. As for the gentleman, if he was not before aware of the interest he had excited, your encouraging smiles this evening, must have certainly acquainted him with the pleasing fact.”

“I certainly cannot venture, dearest sister, to appear to-morrow, if I have so offended against female delicacy.”

“You mistake, my love, for there is a

vast difference, between overstepping the bounds of propriety, and shewing a modest preference for a deserving individual; and I trust it will ever be the privilege, and the pride of a virtuous female, to make a distinction between an honourable man, and one of loose principles, however high his rank may be. You may retire to your couch, with the perfect assurance, that Hugo is well deserving of much more attention, than you deigned to pay him this evening."

"I shall then sleep with a light heart, dearest Matilda, and feel quite reassured by your opinion; but is it not innocent to wish, that Hugo may indeed receive the reward, for all his gallant and noble deeds?"

Locked in a warm embrace, the lovely sisters composed themselves to rest, and soon forget all their hopes and fears.

CHAPTER VII.

ENRAPTURED with the idea, of having engaged the affections of a being so lovely as Emmeline, but unwilling, until his Knightly rank, (which he had now no doubt of immediately obtaining, if noble daring could achieve the desirable object,) should authorize him to make an open declaration of his sentiments, and demand her hand, Hugo yet thought it prudent to acquaint Ethelinda with the state of his heart; and as he stood alone, apparently without family connexions, and the origin of his birth a mystery, he also deemed it necessary to impart, in confidence, his claims and future expectations, of recovering the title and estates of his ancestors.

Meeting Ethelinda alone in the saloon,

he immediately communicated the necessary particulars regarding his rank, and confessed his passion for the fair Emmeline, to her infinite delight; and she candidly said, that no event could have afforded her more satisfaction, and that it would be a pleasing consideration to her, that in sanctioning her daughter's attachment, she was about to entrust her happiness to a man, of whose character and merits she had obtained such sterling proofs. She at the same time highly applauded his delicacy, in resolving to defer his hopes, until he had obtained the promised honours; and assured him of her anxious and warm support, and that his interest with the fair object of his affections, should not suffer during his absence, which she sincerely hoped would only be temporary.

Having secured the approbation of the mother, Hugo retired from her presence with a light heart, and elastic step, whilst joy beamed in his countenance, and at this happy moment he encountered the fair

Emmeline herself, whose proffered hand he kissed with rapture. Half laughing, half blushing, she gently withdrew it from his grasp, and smiling, demanded—

“What mighty deed have you achieved? and who has performed the ceremony of Knighthood? for this lofty bearing does not become the modest Squire.”

“Were I indeed a Knight, would it afford you pleasure, dearest Emmeline?”

“Not me, indeed, Sir Presumptuous, for since you are scarcely endurable as a Squire, I much fear the golden spurs would destroy the little command you have over your pride!”

“Say rather,” Hugo replied, “that the duties which I should swear to perform, would render me more dignified, and considerate, particularly to the weaker and fairest part of creation.”

“Flatter not yourself, Sir Vanity, fair ladies will not trouble you for your attentions.”

“I shall not attempt to gain their favour,

as the affection of one fair maiden, will perfectly satisfy me, and occupy all my thoughts."

"Indeed! Sir Modesty, you are very moderate in your wishes; of course this enchanting damsel will be a paragon of perfection"—

"And lovely as yourself," replied the enamoured youth, forgetting in the excitement of the moment, all his previous firm resolutions; but he was saved from the tender declaration, by the unexpected entrance of Sir Ernest and Matilda; when Emeline eagerly embraced the opportunity of hurrying from their presence, with her cheeks rivalling the crimson rose, in the brilliancy of their colour.

"By our Lady of Einsidlin!" exclaimed Sir Ernest, laughing, "Hugo, thou art a very fortunate man, to become the confidant of all the beautiful girls in the castle, how do you contrive it? for in general your demeanour is so reserved in their presence, that one would naturally imagine

a private conference would overpower your modesty, and sink you to the earth ; perhaps they apply to you, as you evidently possess some secret power of improving their complexions, as on both the late occasions, the roses seemed to have tinged their cheeks with a more rich and vivid colour."

"I would rather recommend the fair sex to apply to you, Sir Ernest, since you are acquainted with the happy art of colouring highly. The Lady Blanche, as I before mentioned to you, merely asked a few questions touching the events of the campaign, when—"

"True! true! but pray what was the Lady Emmeline asking? Does your approach usually frighten your sister, dearest Matilda? how long is it since her nerves have become so delicate? "

"Sir Ernest will readily allow," replied Hugo quickly, "that since the Lady Emmeline is pleased to attach so much importance to the services, which circumstances

enabled me to perform for her mother and sister, it is by no means wonderful, that she should occasionally converse on the subject, especially when she meets me accidentally, as she did just now, coming from the saloon."

"Nothing more reasonable, noble Sir Squire, and no doubt, as the fair lady finds these accidental tête-à-têtes so interesting, she will repeat them often, and as young ladies are extremely expert in creating opportunities, she will, as an affectionate daughter and sister, never be at a loss for questions, on which to demand information."

"You are severe, dear Ernest," said Matilda, "it is quite natural in Emmeline to be anxious about us, and you surely would not wish Hugo to be churlish, and refuse to answer?"

"By no means! and I admire the prudence of the ladies in selecting so discreet an adviser, who seems always on his guard, and never betrays their confidence.

Odium will certainly attach to my name, for carrying away such a trusty Mentor. But to proceed to more serious affairs, it will be necessary, Sir Squire, to make the final preparations, as our march is fixed for to-morrow."

"And now, dear Ernest," said Matilda, (as Hugo retired to issue the proper orders) "let me entreat you, to spare yourself in the approaching contest, you have already obtained renown, by your gallant actions, more than sufficient, to establish your reputation, as a brave Warrior,—as the daughter, and soon to become the wife of a Soldier, I must naturally expect, that you will sometimes be called upon, to protect your interest, and it would be unreasonable in me to oppose it, but I trust that this will be the last time, at least for some years, on which you will be obliged to draw your sword for foreign purposes." "My sweetest love, replied the youth, I am confident you never could love a coward, and that you would sooner see me

perish, than dishonour myself; but whilst I avoid no proper occasion of appearing in arms, this I can safely promise you, and will also faithfully perform, 'to seek no unnecessary quarrel,' and be assured dearest, that your power over me, will increase with time, and that your requests will be no sooner urged, than obeyed."

"I have full confidence in the truth of your affection, dear Ernest, and that you will always be more likely to anticipate, than to wait for the expression of my wishes."

"Which your own generous and virtuous mind, will always render an easy and delightful task."

"As this is the last time," Matilda said, "that we are likely to meet, at least for some weeks, and circumstances may arise to affect your interest, during the approaching contest, I would, without wishing to influence your judgment, still hazard my opinion on that subject, which is nearest my heart."

“ I conclude,” said Ernest, interrupting her, “ you allude to my opposition to the demands of the Pope.”

“ Exactly so, and were it not for fear of offending you, I would earnestly exhort you to consider the danger of exciting such a powerful adversary.”

“ You are too easily alarmed, my dearest love, at their violent threats, for believe me, bullies always talk loud.”

“ You forget yourself, dearest Ernest, at least speak with reverence of the higher powers, and whatever may be your own private opinion, seek not to disturb the belief, on which our happiness exists, and seriously reflect, that it will materially impede, if not entirely prevent our union ; you must be aware of the strict principles of passive obedience to the commands of the head of the Church, which my dear mother entertains: What then do you imagine would be her decision, in regard to our marriage, should your continued refusal to obey the decrees of your Spiritual Lord,

produce (what my soul even shudders to think of) the fatal sentence of excommunication?

“Why alarm yourself with these imaginary chimeras, my dearest Matilda; it is sufficient to combat real evils, when they actually assail us, not to raise up phantoms of the brain. I will however assure you, that the danger you apprehend is not likely to arrive, and more, I will tell you in confidence, that the present Abbot has, ere this, done homage to the Pope, as receiving the appointment from his hands, and therefore, for the present, there is no plea for violent measures.”

“You have relieved my mind from a load of misery, may I then trust that you will not allow your passion to supersede your discretion? but believe me, my advice is only dictated by the purest motives of affection.”

“I am, indeed, fully convinced of that my love, for our long acquaintance, and the intimate exchange of our thoughts, be-

fore we pledged the sweet vows of affection, have enabled me fully to appreciate the truth and purity of your character; and your love is dearer to me than all other earthly joys."

The drooping head of the lovely girl fell on the shoulder of her lover, whilst the tears streamed from her eyes, and her bosom throbbed convulsively.

"Why mourns my own Matilda?" tenderly enquired the youth, encircling her slender waist with his arm; she was silent, but at length whispered—

"Pardon my folly, dear Ernest, my strength of mind is withered; I am not the same being, as before the fatal events at Greiffen, and this dispute regarding the Abbey has chased away the gay visions of my fancy, and substituted the picture of the tomb. A fatal presentiment of some approaching evil, at times overpowers me, and fills my mind with melancholy apprehensions; and the pain of so soon parting with you again, has increased my weak-

ness. I hope you will not cease to love me?"

The knight pressed her with tenderness to his breast, and with compressed lips, said—

"Never, never my first, my last, my only love; death would be more preferable to life without you."

The night was far advanced before sleep closed the eyelids of the suffering girl, and visions of distractful sight, deprived her of that invigorating refreshment which slumber in our early youth usually produces.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was late on a September evening when the Archbishop of Mentz, after having been engaged, during part of the day, in his private cabinet with dispatches, apparently of great importance, and having in vain repeatedly demanded, if his Secretary father John had yet returned, prepared at length to retire for the night, at the same time issuing the most positive commands, that the arrival of the monk should be instantly announced to him. The expected visitor however did not appear, and the Elector entered his study at an early hour on the following morning. His eyes were hollow; care and anxiety were strongly depicted in his countenance, for he had passed a restless and sleepless

night, and his attendants naturally concluded, that his feelings were excited by the great importance of the approaching Election.

It was a subject indeed of vital consequence, for Germany had been in the most distracted state, since the death of Frederic the second; and though two Emperors had been elected, William of Holland, and Richard Earl of Cornwall, still they had possessed no influence, being merely nominal sovereigns, particularly the latter, who being a foreigner and generally absent, had no local interest, and had obtained the Empire through bribery; but since his death, in 1271, there had been a positive interregnum. Fortunately for unhappy Germany, the reigning Pontiff, Gregory the Tenth, was prudent, generous and humane; and, instead of pursuing the usual line of politics, adopted by his predecessors, of sowing discord amongst the numerous Sovereigns and petty Chiefs of the country, all actuated by different and

conflicting interests, he had nobly endeavoured to reconcile the jarring pretensions and passions of these ambitious Princes; but finding his efforts useless, and the election, under various pretences, still protracted, had at length resolutely declared, * “that if this necessary measure was any longer delayed, he would himself immediately appoint a ‘King of the Romans;’ and the most powerful of the imperial cities, associated for the general security, and to prevent a double return, declared, ‘that they would acknowledge no King, unless unanimously chosen.’”

The morning had far advanced, when a slight tap at the door, and a well known voice announced, the arrival of the long-expected envoy, who was received with evident delight by the anxious Bishop.

“Well, holy Father, have you succeeded in your mission? What untoward event delayed your return? for I had every

* Historical.

reason to expect you on the preceding evening; but you seem exhausted with fatigue, permit me to offer you some of this old wine, it has been fifty years in the Archiepiscopal cellars; and will warm, and circulate your blood this damp day," at the same time presenting an antique chased silver goblet to the worthy monk.

The old man felt quite revived, and stated—

"I have happily succeeded in my mission, beyond my most sanguine expectations, with the Electors of Treves and Cologne; though, from some secret information, which I obtained, the Ambassadors of Ottocarus of Bohemia had already been exerting themselves in their master's cause."

"Have you executed the other objects of your mission?"

"I am also enabled to reassure your hopes in this also, for in a conference with the Burgrave of Nuremberg, he requested me to inform your Grace, that you may

place perfect reliance on the voices of the Secular Electors, on condition that you will guarantee the accomplishment of the marriages, with the daughters of the future King of the Romans. Now since this affair seems arranged to your satisfaction, may I venture to use the privilege of a friend, and demand the peculiar reasons, which have urged you to take such an interest in this business."

The Bishop, smiling, replied—

"It is an affair of the heart."

The astonished Monk raised his eyes, and fixed them on his Superior. The Elector laughed, and said—

"There is more than one passion. In this instance, it is gratitude. On my nomination to this See, I repaired to Rome to receive the confirmation, and pallium from the hands of the Pope; but as the roads were dangerous, being infested by numerous bands of robbers, the Count of Hapsburg, at whose castle I had been hospitably entertained, escorted me himself

over the Alps, and on my return, after performing the same service, received me with great cordiality. I was at this time impressed with a high sense of his talents, character, and generosity; and determined, if opportunity should offer, to repay his kindness. Consequently, since the death of the last Emperor, Richard, I have laboured incessantly, and trust not without success, for his election to the vacant throne. And I may truly say, that my former judgment and partiality, have been fully confirmed, by his subsequent noble conduct, and brilliant successes; and there does not exist a man in this country, more capable of restoring peace, and prosperity to the Empire."

Father John expressed himself highly gratified, at this mark of confidence, and coincided entirely with his Superior, in the opinion which he had formed of the brave and celebrated Count of Hapsburg. Their departure was fixed for the following day, as the Election was to commence on the

25th, at Frankfort. Father John had scarcely retired, when the Bishop of Sec-kan, the Bohemian Ambassador, was announced.

It was now that Werner was obliged to exert his consummate address, and powers of persuasion, for the entire success of the unanimous Election depended on the acquiescence of the wily Bishop,* as the representative of his master. Distinguished for his knowledge, and taste in the arts and sciences, he had, as a scholar, been one of the chief ornaments of the University of Prague, at that period the most celebrated in the German Empire; after obtaining some Church preferment, he was soon recommended to the notice of his Sovereign, from the fame of his superior talents, and was immediately employed on several delicate missions, which he conducted with happy success, for he possessed a deep knowledge of character,

* An historical character.

judgment, temper, and capacity; but skilful as he was in negotiation, and quick of comprehension, he was, despite these advantages, over-reached by the superior cunning of the Archbishop, who had arranged all his plans with a master's mind. The conference was opened by the Elector declaring—

“ It is unnecessary for me, Sir Priest, to describe the present unfortunate situation of this distracted country, and the pressing necessity for a speedy and unanimous election of the head of the empire. And it cannot have escaped your penetration, that no Potentate in Europe, is so well calculated to fill this high station, with honour to himself, and advantage to the empire, as your own renowned Sovereign, Ottocarus, acquainted as he is with the language, manners, and constitution of Germany, and in command of an excellent army, sufficiently powerful to make his just authority respected.”

“ It gives me great satisfaction,” replied

the Bishop of Seckan, "to hear these observations, from the Chief of the Electoral College, and it certainly strengthens my hopes, that the choice will fall on my master, since with your co-operation, there will be no difficulty in obtaining the majority of votes; as it is obviously the interest of all, to elect a Prince of such generosity of character, who will not only have the inclination, but the power of being grateful. I can impart, in confidence, to your Highness, that the King my master, knowing that the Electors have many rightful claims to prefer, has entrusted me with full powers to grant all just demands."

The Elector replied—"That is an important consideration, and will doubtless procure for the King of Bohemia a certain majority; but unfortunately it is not sufficient in the present instance, as the Pope, united with the principal states and imperial cities, has resolved to acknowledge no Sovereign, unless unanimously chosen."

“This objection is indeed formidable and unexpected: but can your Lordship suggest no means of avoiding it?”

After an affected pause, Werner artfully replied—

“The only mode to obviate this difficulty, that I can suggest, is to entrust the nomination to Louis, Duke of Bavaria.”

“It would be an excellent expedient, if we could secure the Duke.”

“You can easily try the experiment yourself. Repair to Frankfort to-morrow, and make your own proposals; if the Duke appears willing to consent, I may venture to assure you of the compliance of the remaining Electors. The game is in your own hand, play it boldly, and securely.”

The Bishop could scarce conceal his joy, as he had now no doubt of success, having to make terms with one, instead of all the greedy electors; and though pressed to partake of the splendid hospitalities of the Archiepiscopal Palace, he politely

declined, being anxious to proceed at once to Frankfort, to secure his prize. The two Prelates parted with great cordiality, Spendan declaring, "that they were worthy labourers in the same good cause: that as their zeal was equal, their rewards would be proportionably rich." Werner smiled at the easy credulity of the dupe.

CHAPTER IX.

LOUIS the severe, Duke and Elector of Bavaria, became highly enamoured of the charms of the beautiful Mary, Princess of Brabant; but being of a fiery, jealous disposition, he made little progress in obtaining the regard of his mistress, notwithstanding his high rank, and great expectations; yet, as love is able to soften the most savage disposition, the suspicious, and uncertain temper of the Bavarian Prince, became open, candid, and steady; the lowering clouds were dispersed from his brow, and placid content sat on his handsome countenance; a total revolution seemed to have taken place, in his feelings and manners. Hitherto, an habitual reserve had attended him, when mixing in the gay

festivities of the Court: whilst others abandoned themselves to all the joys of mirth, and his playful lady-love entered, in the innocent gaiety of her pure heart, into the animating, and lively amusements of her young companions, he alone seemed absorbed in his own solitariness, and retiring into some distant corner, endeavoured to fly from the dangerous contagion of liveliness.

Mary had often rallied him, on his reserved, and misanthropical behaviour, and chided him with such gentle and alluring grace, that his heart was softened, and he began to think, that cheerfulness was not so sinful in a female, and was even innocent. The figure of the Princess was perfection itself, the expression of her countenance, the most charming imaginable, and her smile captivating; she also possessed the enviable talent of extracting amusement from every trifle, yet her conduct was ever restrained within the bounds of the strictest modesty, and propriety; and

the artless, and engaging simplicity of her manners, naturally obtained the admiration, and affection, of every individual at Court.

Louis himself was early distinguished for his amiable qualities amongst his male friends; but where females were concerned, his natural infirmity of disposition, rendered him ever ready to take offence, if his mistress did not devote herself entirely to him; and he invariably became sullen, and suspicious, if she ventured, even in the slightest degree, to notice any other nobleman. He was one of those self-tormentors, ever ready to torture their imaginations, and attribute improper motives, to the slightest acts of politeness. Though great mental energy, may enable an individual, to quell this hateful passion for a season, still, it lies buried in the recesses of the heart, ready, like a smothered flame, to burst forth with renovated violence, at the first light trace of suspicion. The truth of which will be too truly proved in the sequel.

In the mean time, the Courtiers were astonished at the sudden change in the Duke's manner; instead of casting a damp on the joys of society, he joined in all their amusements, with great spirit, became the gayest of the gay, and constantly promoted new parties of pleasure. The contrast between his former and present behaviour, was so great, and his attentions to the Princess so constant, and agreeable, that she naturally felt flattered, that her charms should have produced such a striking effect, and perceiving her power over him, became really in love.

A circumstance now happened, which, though it did not excite any uneasiness, or remark at the moment, was productive afterwards of great misconception, and final misery. At a grand tournament, held in honour of the birth day of the Princess Mary, she was appointed to distribute the prizes to the victors. Amongst the Knights forming the suite of the Duke, Sir William of Rieth was conspicuous, as well for the

dignified carriage of his person, as for his proficiency in military exercises : At the request of Louis, he had joined him in challenging all competitors, and after great efforts, succeeded in overthrowing his bold adversaries, receiving as a reward for his skill, an embroidered scarf, from the fair hands of the Princess, accompanied by some handsome compliments, on his great prowess; and as the victor of the day, was, moreover, highly distinguished by Mary during the festivities of the evening; Louis himself joining in the praises, so justly showered on his favourite.

Amongst the Knights who contended for the prizes, Sir Charles of Wallenstadt had been the greatest sufferer; for taking Sir William at an unfair advantage, before the trumpet had sounded the charge, he had furiously endeavoured to drive him out of the lists; but fortunately his malice was without effect: for the Knight adroitly avoiding the shock, rode to the opposite end of the barriers, and advancing again

at full speed, struck his spear with such skill against the helmet of his adversary, that he was thrown from his horse with great violence, and rolled over and over, amidst the shouts and laughter of the spectators.

Base, and envious in disposition, he had long selected Sir William, as the object of his most inveterate hatred; and had sought every means to deprive him of the Elector's favour, hitherto without success. But when once he took a dislike, he ever pursued the object of it, with unrelenting fury; and, provided he could attain his wishes, was not over nice in the choice of his means. He had hoped before the Heralds gave the signal, to render Sir William ridiculous; but caught in his own net, his defeat only inflamed his revengeful feelings.

A few days after the tournament, the Duke was obliged to return with all speed to his own dominions, to quell a dangerous inroad, and internal insurrection; having

previously gained the consent of the Princess to their nuptials at the earliest period. The disturbance, however, proved of a more serious nature, than he had at first imagined; and a considerable time elapsed, before he succeeded in restoring order; and such was the excited state of the country, that he deemed it imprudent to leave his own territories, at the present moment; and was, therefore, obliged to marry the beautiful Mary by proxy: but then the selection of the individual to perform the ceremony, and escort his bride to Munich, was a serious consideration. Placing, however, firm reliance on the noble qualities, and high sense of honour of Sir William of Rieth he resolved to entrust the delicate mission to him.

All the necessary documents being signed, the Princess was espoused in the usual form; and conducted with great pomp towards Bavaria, on the confines of which, she was entertained two days at the castle of her noble conductor, for the

purpose of recovering from the fatigues of a long march. Here, the Duke met his lovely bride, and accompanied her into Munich, where the final ceremony was performed. All was joy; all was confidence, and happiness for a short period; but the sleeping lion was again aroused from his den: suspicion was attached to every innocent act of kindness, or familiarity, and the flame was fostered by the mysterious hints, and insinuations of the perfidious Sir Chares. "Trifles light as air, became confirmed as holy writ." The current of Louis's blood was changed, and in the infuriated passion of the moment, he vowed a bloody revenge. Possibly, if his better judgment had been allowed to resume its sway—if he had in his cooler moments, recalled the thousand instances of his Mary's genuine, and devoted attachment; the bitter resentment of the moment would have died away, and love have resumed its seat.

But an artful friend, under the false

semblance of fidelity, poured insidious poison into his ear, and with feigned reluctance declared, that he could no longer allow his injured master, to remain in ignorance of the conduct of Sir William. The Duke beckoning to his Chancellor to attend, ordered Sir Charles to proceed.

“You may remember, Sire, the ill-concealed joy, with which Sir William undertook the commission of escorting the Lady Mary to Munich; to me, who had regarded with pain, the many tender proofs of esteem with which she had honoured him, whilst you were permitted to remain unnoticed, in the halls of her father’s; and the undisguised flashes of love, which glanced from her eyes, as she girded him with the sword and belt, as the luckiest, I will not say best, lance at the tournament. This”—

“This is all vain surmise,” cried the enraged Duke; “proofs, Sir Traitor, proofs, or by all the Saints, you shall dangle from

yonder lofty elm, to be a mark for the archers to direct their shafts at."

The practised villain had prepared his train, and calmly replied—

"Such be my fate, if I fail in affording the necessary evidence. But you, noble Chancellor, will do me the justice to observe, that the Duke's commands alone, urge me to proceed. I will not mention the frequent secret conferences she held with Sir William, previous to your offer of marriage, but neglecting the minor circumstances, which usually add great weight to evidence, will at once proceed to the principal fact. Will your Highness permit me to introduce my faithful Squire Albert?"

The Duke assenting, the worthy accomplice entered, and being commanded by the Prince to relate, without fear or respect of persons, the principal circumstances attending the reception of the Electress at the Castle of Rieth, replied—

"I was the confidential Squire of Sir William at that period, and in consequence

of overhearing an appointment, between the Princess and my Lord, determined to watch him, and saw him steal at midnight by a secret passage, and enter the chamber of the lady. I instantly resolved to quit his service, having no longer confidence in a master, who could so dishonour his Knightly dignity and oath."

"Then, caitiff!" the Duke madly exclaimed, "why did you not accuse the traitor? away with him to instant death."

"Your Highness," remarked the Chancellor, "has pledged your word for his personal safety."

"It is well!" replied the Duke, regarding Sir Charles and his Squire with suspicion—"If you fail in establishing the charge, the executioner shall try his skill."

"Your highness," the Squire resumed, "will readily grant, that great danger attended this course. Could I imagine, that having selected the lady to share your bed, you would listen for an instant, on the eve

of becoming master of her charms, to any accusation, urged by a simple individual, against her purity? But your interest was not neglected, for well acquainted with the high credit of Sir Charles at court, I sought his protection, and imparted, as in duty bound, the secret to him. But after all, this only amounts to suspicion, the Princess may be perfectly virtuous; perhaps the interview only related to business."

"The devil's business!" roared out the Duke, "but how now, Sir Charles, or Sir Traitor, did you too betray your benefactor?"

"I appeal to your Highness's own recollection, whether I have failed in my duty."

"True! too true! Idiot that I was, not to attend to your frequent suggestions."

"Your Highness may remember the agitation in which you found the Duchess, on returning suddenly from hunting, one evening in March last, when she ascribed

it to a dream, in which she beheld you exposed to great danger. Perhaps Sir William might have explained it better, had he been summoned from the adjoining chamber, to which he had that instant retired. You may also"—

“It is enough, Sir Babbler, it is enough! Make out the warrant for her arrest, on charge of high treason; and let Sir William, of Rieth, be executed immediately. And, Sir Chancellor, when the order is obeyed, acquaint me. Sir Charles, I deliver the custody of the Princess to your special charge.”

She was treated with the greatest barbarity by her cruel jailor; her own garments were rudely torn from her, and others of the coarsest quality substituted; her work, her lute, her books, in fact every thing that could contribute to her amusement, and gladden life, were denied her. Her table was served with disgusting food, and the third evening, an attempt was made to terminate her innocent existence, by infu-

sing poison into her milk, but observing an unusual sediment, when stirring it, she declined tasting it. Fearful of eating more than was absolutely necessary to avoid positive starvation, her strength soon began rapidly to decline, and the constant dread of treachery, drove the refreshment of sleep from her eyes. But conscious innocence, and a firm reliance on the mercy, and merits of her Redeemer, supported her mind, under this accumulated load of misery.

In vain she demanded a copy of the accusations against her, and to be confronted with her persecutors. In vain she pleaded the cheerful, but modest, tenor of her life, demanding with tears and earnest supplications, an interview with her husband: all her protestations, all her demands, fell on the hardened ear of her most inveterate enemy. Dim was the lustre of her speaking eye, faded were the roses of her cheek, shrank was the rounded symmetry of her figure; a deep and settled

melancholy usurped the place of that enchanting smile, which had animated all hearts; she had loved her husband, with pure and disinterested affection, had entered with spirit into all his amusements, but now she was not only denied, even a simple interview, but was charged with the crimes, most abhorrent to a delicate mind, treated with the greatest indignity and cruelty, and her life even threatened.

As she reflected, that this blow was levelled by that hand, which ought to have supported and cherished her, both in happiness and in misery, her mental sufferings became more severe, a fatal malady preyed deeply on her heart, her delicate hand, as she held it to guard her weak eyes, from the dim light of the solitary lamp, appeared almost transparent; and the increasing languor of her hectic countenance announced, that death had discharged his barbed dart, but still he was too slow in his approaches, for the desires of her inhuman enemy.

She had early retired to rest, after reposing her griefs on him, who is ever ready to pour balm into the afflicted soul, and had sunk into a gentle slumber, where pleasing visions of a speedy release from her unhappy situation, danced before her mind, when a light step suddenly awoke her, and starting up she exclaimed—"It is my dear husband come to release me," but her dim eye fell on the cowl of a Monk, and she remained fixed in mute astonishment.

"Daughter," said the good man, "your end is fast approaching; and it is your duty, as a good christian, to confess all your sins, both of omission and commission. Your course has hitherto been prosperous and short, yet the youngest in this transitory life, are often tempted to commit such flagrant acts, as unfit them, without repentance, for another world."

"Father," replied the afflicted girl, in a low but distinct tone, (for misfortune and exhaustion had changed the melodious

notes of her voice into a faint whisper) “as I feel that I am soon to depart on my pilgrimage, I can with truth declare, that my soul repents sincerely of all its crimes against my heavenly father, but I trust that they have arisen, rather from negligence than intention.”

“Have you ever wronged your illustrious husband? Remember, you are on the brink of eternity.”

“As I hope for pardon, never, in the slightest degree; and humbly trust that he may receive forgiveness for the cruel treatment I have experienced—he cannot but be ignorant of the indignities which have been offered me.”

After many other questions, the Monk having prepared her soul for its passage to eternity, departed, uttering with deep emotion, “the Lord have mercy on you.”

The door grated on its hinges, and as she listened to the retiring steps of the Monk, as they re-echoed along the vaulted passages, she reflected on the singularity.

of the whole proceeding. Hitherto, she had been denied the consolations of religion, but now it was voluntarily offered; then, the lateness of the hour, and the solemn words and manner of the confessor, struck her with doubt and dismay. Possibly her husband had been deceived by some concealed enemy, (but she could not recollect having intentionally offended any person) and having relented, had immediately dispatched the Monk, that his doubts might be cleared. But, was murder intended! her trembling limbs confessed her anxious fears. At this moment the distant sounds of approaching steps aroused her attention; the alternate sensations of hope and doubt made her sick unto death—her head sunk on her pillow, her heart died within her, as the steps ceased on arriving at the door, and all was hushed, as if the persons were listening; presently, the key was placed cautiously in the lock, and turned, the door slowly grated on its hinges—they were not the quick sounds

of the eager messengers of release. Three men entered,—her senses nearly failed her, as she viewed their malignant countenances, on which all the hateful passions were depicted; her eyes were half closed. They advanced with stealthy steps, like wild beasts ready to spring on their prey; one of the party bore a feather bed in his arms. The fatal truth at once flashed across her mind. Uttering a piercing shriek, she sprang from her bed, with a fearful effort, and throwing herself at the feet of the foremost, clasped his knees with convulsive energy, crying, “Mercy, mercy, by all your hopes of pardon hereafter, spare an innocent sufferer; oh! it is a fearful thing to die, and to rush with such a short preparation into the presence of one’s maker.” Her youth, her beauty, her piteous exclamations, for an instant softened even the iron hearts of her murderers; but constant practice in these deadly scenes, had banished pity from their breasts; and their

ferocious leader, in all the frantic fury of scorn, exclaimed, "do you tremble, villains? my dagger's point shall taste your recreant hearts' blood!"

They seized the wretched struggling girl, and pressed the feather bed on her face. It was the work of a few moments. That last sigh had terminated her existence—she lay a lifeless corpse.

Agitated by contending passions, the wretched Elector paced his apartment with hasty strides, occasionally stopping, and listening in anxious suspense, as if for the arrival of some individual. At length, an aged Monk entered—the knees of Louis trembled, cold drops of perspiration poured down his forehead, as he faintly and hesitatingly demanded the result. With a tremulous voice the Friar whispered in his ear, "She is innocent; if truth and purity exist not in her, they have fled the earth."

"Hasten my good Mathew, hasten, release her; here is my signet, restore her to the arms of her repentant husband."

The Monk rapidly hurried from the room. He was a minute too late*—death had closed her mortal career.

* The death of Mary is historical.

CHAPTER X.

THE important day, which was destined either to prolong or terminate the miseries occasioned by the interregnum, had at length arrived. Frankfort was crowded to excess, by the deputies of the principal states and imperial cities, with their numerous and splendid suites, all anxiously awaiting the decision of the Electors.

The Archbishop had, at an early hour, privately assembled the Secular Members at his hotel; had pointed out to them, in forcible language, the danger of electing so formidable a Sovereign, as the King of Bohemia, to the Imperial Throne, whose power would enable him to carry his ambitious projects into immediate execution, and “When he demands the restitution of the several fiefs, which we all hold by a

very slight tenure, who will be bold or strong enough to refuse compliance? Assuredly the noble Ottocarus possesses courage, generosity, firmness and experience in the art of government; indeed all those shining qualities, which eminently fit him for this high station, and distinguish him far above all his contemporaries—but then we only require a sovereign, and not a master. In Rodolph of Hapsburg we shall find the same eminent abilities, both as a statesman and soldier, which equally entitle him to aspire to the rank of King of the Romans, while from the small extent and poverty of his territories, we shall have no reason to dread his interference with our just rights and privileges. In addition to this convincing argument, I have to offer the certain prospect of a near alliance with the new Emperor, by a marriage with his daughter, and this will at least diminish the fears of the Secular Electors, in regard to any of their former actions.”

“Who will guarantee this article?” demanded the Electors simultaneously.

The Archbishop opened the door of the inner apartment, and requested Father John to introduce the Prince of Hohen-zollern. “The Spiritual Electors have done me the honour to submit their judgments entirely to my advice, and have expressed themselves perfectly satisfied, with my guarantee of all the stipulations, which they in their moderation have demanded. I may therefore trust, that my Secular friends will place the same confidence in my word. But to render this point more satisfactory, the Prince has joined me in signing this contract (placing it on the table for their inspection) on the part of Rodolph Count of Hapsburg. Should either of your highnesses consider this unsatisfactory, may I request an immediate dissent?”

“We are perfectly content with the pledge.”

“This point being fully arranged,” con-

tinued the Archbishop, "I have now only to acquaint the Assembly, that in a long private conference with the Bishop of Seckan, the Ambassador of the Bohemian King, I suggested, that the only mode of insuring an unanimous election, was to refer it to the decision of Louis Duke of Bavaria, to which the Envoy readily assented."

These important preliminaries being amicably arranged, the meeting broke up, and the members proceeded to the chamber of election, where they found the Spiritual Electors already assembled.

It was a long gloomy room, without much ornament, the walls being lined in wainscot, divided into small panels, in which the portraits of the former Emperors were painted. The usual minute ceremonies being observed, two candidates were proposed—Alphonso King of Castille, and Ottocarus Sovereign of Bohemia. The Archbishop of Mentz, President of the College, then rose, and addressed the meeting:

“It is needless for me, most illustrious Electors, to expatiate on the absolute necessity of arriving at an unanimous choice, since the principal free states and imperial cities have explicitly declared, that they will not submit to a double return; and moreover, should we fail in making a satisfactory decision, the Holy Father has himself intimated that he will appoint an Emperor, of his own proper authority. The safest mode for us therefore to pursue, in this dilemma, is to entrust the nomination to an individual in whom we can all place our confidence. Let, then, Louis Duke of Bavaria be the judge. For mine own part, I publicly consent to abide by his award; but what says the Bishop of Seckan to this proposal? will he consent to trust the cause of his noble and renowned master, whose fame lies in the hearts of the Germans, to the same decision? Let those who object, declare their dissent.”—There was profound silence. The Archbishop then turning to Louis, administered the oath:—

“Thou shalt truly swear by the Holy Evangelists, to return him whom thou shalt consider as best calculated to fill the important office of King of the Romans, without favour, partiality, or any undue motive whatever.”

Louis, after some minutes of apparent deep deliberation, again rose from his seat, (while a smile played over the countenance of Ottocarus’s representative, indicative of his expected triumph) and in a firm voice he declared—“In conformity with the power entrusted to me by the Electoral College, I nominate and appoint Sir Rodolph Count of Hapsburg, to be King of the Romans; and he is hereby unanimously elected.”* The Electors all rose uncovered, and said, “Hail to the noble Rodolph King of the Romans;” who disputes his title, is a traitor.

The astonishment of the Assembly can be better imagined than described, for no

* The appointment of Rodolph is historical.

suspicion had entered their imagination, that such would be the result; when, however, the Bohemian Ambassador had somewhat recovered from his evident surprise, he gave vent to his indignation—insisted, in vehement terms, that the election was void; entered a long protest, in the name of his master, and hinted, in no measured words, that he had been basely over-reached by a concerted plot; and that their puppet should soon repent of his temerity, should he attempt to exercise an authority so illegally obtained. The Archbishop coolly replied, “that if any secret scheme had in reality existed, he doubted not the worthy Bishop himself had lent his honourable assistance; that he left it to his conscience to say, whether, having agreed to the arrangement, it was worthy of his character, as the representative of a powerful Sovereign, now to deny the validity of the Duke of Bavaria’s decision. The Archbishop concluded with proposing, that the Prince of Hohenzollern should be au-

thorized to convey their homage to their newly elected Emperor; and having obtained their consent, in virtue of his authority dissolved the Assembly. Thus terminated the twenty-fifth of September, 1273.

CHAPTER XI.

It may, perhaps, excite some surprise, that the Duke of Bavaria should have been so easily prevailed upon, to give his consent to the appointment of the Count of Hapsburg. The fact is, that in consequence of the murder of his wife, who was generally beloved in the country, and considered perfectly innocent, the Nobles had openly expressed their disapprobation of his conduct; and at the meeting at Freysich, held for the especial purpose of considering, the proper line of conduct to be pursued on this important occasion, it had been proposed by the Count of Ausburgh, and warmly seconded by the Lord of Wilhelm, to depose Louis for his act of tyranny and cruelty, and advance his bro-

ther Henry, Duke of Lower Bavaria, to the entire sovereignty. But after a stormy debate, this generous measure had been abandoned, on the plea that Henry would not act openly against his brother, and that their own force was not sufficiently strong, without his support, to carry their dangerous views into execution, with any prospect of success, particularly as Louis would be supported by a strong party in the state, for in general his government was vigorous and just. It was, however, unanimously resolved, that on the election of the King of the Romans, they would resolutely demand, an investigation into the conduct of their Sovereign.

Dreading therefore this appeal to the Emperor, Louis was particularly anxious that the sceptre should not fall into the hands of the most powerful king in Europe, whose dominions extended from the confines of Bavaria, to Raab in Hungary, and from the Adriatic to the shores of the Baltic; and had therefore previously determi-

ned, to oppose the election of Ottocarus; so that when the Archbishop's agent proposed to him to nominate the Count of Hapsburg, then in possession of very slender means, he eagerly consented, wisely considering, that his intimate connexion with the Imperial family, by means of his alliance with Matilda, the eldest daughter, would preclude the possibility of any future inquiry into the mysterious death of the Electress. The Princes of Saxony, and Brandenburg, were also influenced by the hope of becoming allied to the Emperor, through the projected marriage with his daughter, and also by the dread of electing so powerful and able a Prince as Ottocarus, a crisis which they were determined, if possible, to avoid.

Though the Knights had deemed it prudent to defer the inquiry, into the conduct of the Principal in this bloody affair, yet they determined to bring the infamous Sir Charles to a speedy account for his participation in the murder; and the lot fell to

the bold Baron of Wilheim, who, on the breaking up of the Council, immediately proceeded on his route to Munich, accompanied by a numerous train of Knights; but on the evening previous to his arrival in the capital, the public executioner had anticipated him in his mission, for the first object that attracted his attention there, was the body of the caitiff Knight, hanging over the lofty tower of the grand entrance gate.

The fact was, that the two principal agents in this nefarious plot, had quarrelled about the division of the spoil. The broad lands of Rieth, in consequence of the attainder of their Lord, had been immediately bestowed on Sir Charles of Wallenstadt, as a recompence for his disinterested attachment to his master. Albert, however, had stipulated, as his share, for all the ready coin found in the coffers of his late master, to which Sir Charles had readily assented; but on inspecting the private treasury, the amount appeared so great, that the Knight repented of his bar-

gain, and appropriating the greater part to himself, bestowed only three bags of ducats on his Squire. The consequence was, a violent altercation between the two worthies, which ended in an open breach. Albert, however, being a complete master of dissimulation, and fearing the power of his Lord in his own castle, where his tongue might soon be sealed in silence, affected to be content with his share, on his master adding another purse to the number, but secretly vowed a bloody revenge.

On their return to Munich, while the infamous Sir Charles, rioting in the rich acquisition of his noble rival's lands, and rejoicing in the full accomplishment of his implacable revenge, fancied himself in perfect security, and formed mighty projects of ambition, his faithless Squire, sweltering under the slumbering fire of disappointed avarice, sought a secret interview with the pious and worthy monk Matthew.

The Father raised his piercing eye, and

read the workings of a guilty mind, in the ashy countenance of the culprit, whose trembling limbs scarcely supported his sinking frame; whilst his look of fiendish malice, made the Monk shudder at the wickedness of man—as addressing him, he said—

“ My son, what dire misfortune hath unnerved your robust frame? But first seat yourself on this bench. Methinks grief alone hath not caused this emotion, for the fierce expression of deadly passion, is strongly depicted on your haggard countenance. Speak, my son; if thou hast committed any unworthy or bloody deed, confess thy sin, and seek consolation in the bosom of our holy Church, where, by sincere repentance, you may wash away your crime.”

The man, after a violent struggle, seemed to collect himself for the effort; and replied,

“ I must first have promise of pardon, and perfect surety of my personal safety, for it is a serious matter of life and death.”

A confused recollection of his figure and

features, rushed athwart the Monk's mind, whilst the man appeared confused under the glance, which seemed to pierce his inmost thoughts.

“My son,” replied Matthew, “the Church will absolve you from all spiritual crimes; and as regards civil acts, confessions are always held secret. But we surely have met before; your countenance is familiar to me.”

“True, holy Father, I am Albert, the Squire of Sir Charles of Wallenstadt, and cursed be the hour in which I first entered his service, for since then, virtue has been a stranger to my bosom, and the weight of my sins press me to the earth.”

“It is never too late for repentance, my son; but I will seat myself in the confessional chair.”

“My father, if safety be assured me, I wish not for secresy, as I come to bring the guilty to punishment. It is a subject which nearly concerns the Duke himself.”

“Proceed, my son, in confidence; I will,

if possible, obtain the Elector's promise of pardon, and in the mean time, you may remain in perfect security, in the holy sanctuary of St. Mary."

"I was bribed by the splendid promises of Sir Charles, to quit my late lord's service, as my pride was offended, that he had not obtained for me the honour of Knighthood, which my present lord constantly insinuated, was so justly my due. At length, by continued misrepresentations whispered in my ear, my passions became roused, and the eager desire of revenge reigned in my soul: For Sir Charles now informed me, that the Duke had, at his particular request, promised to grant me the golden spurs, but was overruled by the Electress, who ridiculed the idea, and prevailed on him to grant the dignity, to one of her own minions.

It was at this period, that Sir Charles cautiously unfolded the scheme, of undermining the affection of Louis towards his innocent and attached wife, and of finally

leading her, and the noble Sir William, to an untimely grave. The task was easy, as the Duke's temper, naturally suspicious, led him to distort every trifle into positive proof. The preparations having been completed, the match was lighted, the explosion took place: you, holy father, well know the melancholy results.

The kind hearted Monk groaned at this diabolical recital; for he had ever admired the piety, the sweetness of disposition, and purity of mind, of the injured Mary; anxious to clear her character of all suspicion, he warmly demanded—

“As you hope for pardon now, and hereafter, tell me truly, was there any foundation for the reports, so basely circulated against her honour?”

“As I hope to be saved, they were all false! I was worked upon, and deceived, in a moment of passion, and now bitterly regret my infamy. I was always in attendance on my Lord, when he conversed with the Princess, previous to her marriage

with his Highness, and one of her ladies invariably attended her on these occasions; the usual subject of conversation, was the Elector himself. There is also no shade of truth in the principal charge, as the secret passage does not exist, at least in the direction of the Lady Mary's apartments, which were in the western tower; whilst Sir William occupied the eastern wing: besides, it was necessary to pass through her attendant's room, to enter her chamber."

"But, in regard to her agitation, on the Duke's sudden return from hunting; how can you explain that?"

"Easily! for a report was circulated that the Duke had been thrown from his horse, and was much injured; whilst, in fact, the courier had mistaken the Count of Neuperg for the Elector, and instantly rode to the Castle of Rieth for assistance. I myself brought the information to the Princess, who was asleep on the couch, at the moment; on retiring, the door opened,

and the Duke himself entered: Sir William was absent at the time."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the Monk, "My suspicions were then true; she was a murdered innocent. Your crimes, my son, are indeed of the blackest die; a deep and sincere repentance can alone insure you hopes of pardon: But my promise is sacred, haste thee to the sanctuary, lest a great evil come upon thee, and pray earnestly to your Heavenly Father for mercy, through her at whose shrine you take refuge."

The Friar proceeded immediately to the Palace, and imparted the particulars to the unhappy Louis, for the recollection of his amiable, and lovely bride, would at times steal like a pleasing dream over his memory, and, despite his hateful jealousy, would raise a suspicion, that he had been too unjust, and precipitate, in condemning her unheard, on such light evidence. He was engaged in one of these deeply interesting reveries, when his ear was startled

by the mournful sound of the Monk's voice, in whose countenance he beheld traces of recent grief, whilst a tear trickled down his aged cheeks.

“ Well! good Father, what new work of benevolence leads you here? my purse is ever open to your commands: for charity covereth a multitude of sins, and I fear a long catalogue will be laid to my charge. Ah! by the mother of the saints! it should be a melancholy tale, from the sorrowful expression of your brow; yet no person is so well calculated to pour comfort into the wounded soul, as yourself.”

“ Happy, most potent Duke, will it be for you, if my words can produce such an effect; for if pity, and remorse, yet find place in your heart, you will have much need of my aid.”

“ Ha! speak Father, quick! Have my traiterous subjects again dared to threaten me? I have heard of their rebellious meeting at Freysing—”

“ I mix not in the cabals of Nobles, and

Knights, yet, does the subject relate to treason, and that of the worst description.”

“ Explain yourself, worthy Father—”

Matthew having exacted a promise of pardon, related the confession of Albert, and had scarcely concluded, when the Duke starting up with the greatest fury, commanded the Knight in attendance to summon the Provost Marshall; this officer being speedily announced, Louis ordered him (in a whisper) to proceed at once with the guard, to the residence of Sir Charles of Wallenstadt, and to hang the traitor instantly, for the murder of the Electress^l; and then to suspend the body over the gate. “ Here is my signet, as warrant for the execution; return immediately after, for I will not sup, until I hear of his death.”

The wretched victim, little suspecting the fate that awaited him, was unceremoniously seized in the midst of his retainers, and hurried to an ignominious death; all remonstrances, all claims of honour were

disregarded; his belt, sword, and spurs, were rudely torn from him; and his vile body soon dangled over the battlements, amidst the jeers, and execrations, of the irritated populace.

The conscience of the Duke seemed to be lightened of a heavy load, by the execution of his perfidious agent; for, like all despots, though he had loved the treason, he hated the traitor, and actually rejoiced at his fate. The life of the villainous Albert was spared by the Duke, on condition of his quitting the Bavarian territories; but if ever he presumed to return, he swore that he should pay the forfeit of his crimes. The miserable wretch did not long enjoy the benefit of this mercy, but fell in a broil, two days after, (whether by accident, or design, is uncertain) with one of the retainers of the Count of Ausburg.

CHAPTER XII.

MEDITATING on the important struggle, in which he was about to plunge, the haughty Abbot of Saint Gallen, viewed with inward satisfaction, the long line of lances, which the setting sun illumined with its departing rays, advancing in all the pomp of military pride, to his princely castle.

“It is well! good Bartholemew,” (addressing one of his Canons, who stood at his side, half-armed, and looking the character of the soldier rather than that of the Priest) “the noble Lord of Seckingen has more than fulfilled his promise, if I rightly calculate that moving mass; but your eye is more experienced than mine,

and has long been attentively observing their motions; dost thou think that the reality will exceed the numbers stated in this list?" at the same time presenting the muster roll of his forces.

"By our holy founder!" replied the Monk, "the Lord of Seckingen has evinced his zeal for the support of the Church; and leads double his quota to your assistance, as if willing to carve out plenty of work for the hardy contemner of your rights. Rodolph, though he may be styled 'Invincible,' will have some difficulty to hold his fiefs—but hark! my ear surely caught the hoarse blast of a trumpet, echoing down the gorge of that woody mountain, behind the castle."

The doubt was soon cleared by the repeated sounds of warlike instruments; and the advanced guards emerging from the deep forest, began to descend the steep road, which led immediately to the fortress.

"This is, indeed, beyond my utmost ex-

pectation ;” resumed the Abbot, “and Sir Augustus has proved himself a friend, in the hour of danger ; for no other troops, but those of Singau, would come in that direction. Hasten ! good Bartholemew, and let the necessary preparations be made for this unexpected addition to our force, already more than sufficient for the purpose. The Lord of Hapsburg must pay for the heavy charges, which the maintenance of these numerous troops, will entail on our finances ; and it happens at a fortunate period, since his coffers must be well filled, in consequence of his late successes. It will be a sharp, and a long sword that will make him consent to pay. It is safer to have him as a friend than an enemy. But see ! the troops approach the gates ; what a glorious display of plumed helmets, amongst the stout men at arms, in their well quilted leather jerkins. Gregory, command the Chatelain to attend me ; we will receive our friends with the respect due to their noble display of zeal.”

The lordly Abbot descended from the ramparts, to the Baronial Hall, and greeting his friends, at the foot of the noble flight of steps, conducted them to the banquet, which had been long prepared, for their expected arrival. Many a long day had passed since last the hall had been filled with such numerous guests of Knightly rank, who did honour to the flasks of old wine, which passed rapidly around, whilst the roof resounded to the peals of laughter, and the joyous melodies of the Troubadour's songs. At length, the Abbot calling for the parting cup, (a vast goblet filled with spiced wines,) thus addressed his noble guests:—

“The character of the Count of Hapsburg is too well known to you, my friends, to render it necessary for me to impress on you, the absolute necessity of boldness, and rapidity, in our attack on his territories; with your approbation then, we will, at tomorrow's dawn, march our united troops to Wyle. And may our Lady of the Her-

mitage bless our enterprise, and may this ensure us good repose to-night." Then taking a copious draught, he presented the goblet to the Lord of Seckingen.

Arrived in safety at Wyle, the noble leader again entertained his guests, at his hospitable board, and whilst they were deeply engaged in discussing the good things at the table, an attendant with hasty step, and astonishment depicted in his countenance, advanced to the Abbot, and announced the arrival of the Count of Hapsburg.

"To arms! to arms! noble Knights!" the Abbot instantly exclaimed, "Rodolph has anticipated our intentions, and is come to try our strength."

All was confusion, and the Knights and Squires were rushing to the doors, when the Father Gregory appeared, and announced—"that the Count of Hapsburg demanded an audience of the Lord of St. Gallen."

An armed Knight* of extraordinary stature, attended by a suite of six men at arms, who halted at the entrance, advanced with dignity to the top of the hall, and addressed the host, who had half unsheathed his sword—

“Sir Abbot of St. Gallen, I acknowledge you as my liege Lord, and am ready to perform homage for the lands, which I hold under you. If I have hitherto failed in acting, as becomes a feudatory to his superior, it has arisen, not from any disinclination to do that which is right, but solely from my recent acquisition of this property, and the fact of my having been constantly engaged in hostilities; but now that my hands are free, I come, in the spirit of confidence and candour, and as the simplest mode of terminating our differences, propose, as my own negociator—
“Let there be peace between the Abbot

* Historical.

of St. Gallen, and Rodolph Count of Hapsburg.”

The chivalrous Prelate, charmed with this heroic conduct, nobly responded to the appeal, and accepted his offer to do homage for the fiefs, the original cause of their disputes. There was a general buzz of admiration, as the Count, warmly invited to partake of the hospitalities of the board, took his seat at table: and on the Abbot requesting to know, if he wished to send any orders to his troops, Rodolph smiling, and pointing to his few attendants at the bottom of the Hall, replied—

“When my safety depended on a pious Prelate, and these noble Knights, it did not require a numerous escort to ensure it.”

The hall rang with shouts of admiration, at this magnanimous reply, which made a deep impression on his liege Lord, and eventually proved of the greatest advantage to his own interests. Social in disposition, affable and condescending in

society, to which he was partial, though temperate in his cups, Rodolph knew how to adapt his conversation and manners to the circumstances of the moment, and to avert danger by timely flexibility. It is no wonder then that he converted his foes into friends. On rising to depart, St. Gallen warmly pressed him to remain a few days longer, to cement their friendship, but Rodolph replied:—

“The exigency of my affairs, requires my immediate presence; and in order that your noble guests, may themselves judge of the propriety of my departure, I will relate the particulars of a mournful transaction.

“My relation, the Count of Lauffenbourg, at the marriage of his niece, the Lady Gertrude, with the brave Sir Sigismund, of Greiswald, determined to celebrate the joyous occasion with a tournament; to which the Knights of the entire neighbourhood, with the Bishop and principal citizens of Bâsle, were specially

invited. Anxious that harmony should prevail, the noble host was unremitting in his attentions to the prejudices, as well as feelings of his guests; but unfortunately, in the distribution of the seats at the lists, the rank of the Bishop was not sufficiently regarded, the Count of Weiselden being placed above him. The circumstance would have passed unnoticed, had not Ernest of Lauffenbourgh observed the angry looks and irritated pride of the Prelate, and in endeavouring to ascertain, whether any insult had been unintentionally offered to the spiritual Baron, he was informed by an attendant, that on arriving at the seat appointed for him, the Bishop had in a loud and angry tone declared—‘ This is the first time a Count of Weiselden has taken precedence of a Bishop of Bâsle; and if the indignity was intended as one of the amusements of the day, the promoters of it may find, to their cost, that it will terminate in death.’

“ Count Lauffenbourgh being apprized of

the circumstance, approached the mortified Prelate, and affecting surprize, at seeing him in an inferior place, requested, with many apologies, that he would resume his proper situation. But this humble follower of the Gospel was not to be pacified, and soon after joining Maurice, of Bâsle, an influential and intriguing Burgher, whom at all other times he would scarcely condescend to notice, he now lamented to him, that a man of his importance should be treated with such inattention. Maurice, inflamed with resentment at the supposed indignity, and gratified at the distinction with which his superior treated him, readily listened to the insidious observations of the artful Bishop, and at length became so inflated with his fancied importance, that, at the wicked instigation of his adviser, he consented to take a treacherous and bloody revenge for his ideal wrongs. His passions were still more roused, when in running a joust with one of the noble scions of the family of Lauffenbourgh, the

mighty Burgher was rudely unhorsed, amidst the shouts and laughter of the merry spectators.

“The wily Priest did not permit this favourable opportunity to escape him, and whispering poison into his sensitive ear, when writhing under the pain and ridicule attending his fall, the infuriated Maurice detailed his wrongs to his associates, and persuading them, that they were all concerned in the insult offered to his person, obtained their promise, to aid him in his projected measures.

“Every thing appeared propitious to the Prelate, for at the concluding scene of the tournament, twelve Knights having challenged an equal number of the citizens of Bâsle, the discomfiture of the latter was so sudden, and so complete, and the merriment at their all rolling together in the dust was so general, that they could scarcely be prevailed on to remain even for their dinner. The Bishop having entirely succeeded, in first sowing the seeds

of dissension, and then blowing them into a flame, privately withdrew, being anxious to avoid the suspicion, of being implicated in the atrocious affair, which was so shortly to be carried into execution.

“The prizes having been distributed to the Victors in the several encounters, the guests, at the welcome summons of the trumpet, repaired with alacrity to the baronial hall, there to recruit their exhausted strength with the savoury viands, and cool their parched throats with long draughts of the Count’s rich old wine. The doughty Burghers were not remiss in their devotions to the inspiring God, and each succeeding draught only tended to elevate their valour to the proper pitch. Too prudent to make any attempt during the dinner, when all the attendants were in waiting, they reserved their attack until the evening, when the principal part of the company would be engaged in dancing.

“At the appointed hour, the whole party collected in one body, made a des-

perate and simultaneous onset; and many of the Knights, unarmed, and taken by surprise, fell without the slightest resistance. Amongst the slain were Edward, and his cousin George, of Lauffenbourg, Sir Richard, of Neustadt, and several others of note. The lovely and innocent females even, did not escape the indiscriminate rage of these savage wretches. I observe, noble Sirs, that you all participate with me, in just indignation at this unjustifiable attack, but will not your generous hearts be still more affected, when in addition to these facts you learn, that the innocent, the beautiful Gertrude, whose unaffected modesty and simplicity of demeanour, had shed an alluring charm of attraction around her, and engaged the admiration of all, even Gertrude, to whose honour the entertainment had been given, did not escape from the malice of this ruffian crew.

“ Ignorant of the cause of the tumult, she had rushed towards the combatants, in order to interpose her gentle authority,

as Queen of the Sports, and calm their irritated passions, when a base churl, regardless of her devoted efforts, raised his bloody scimitar, and prepared to terminate her *nuptial day* in the cold arms of death; at the moment the blow was falling, a trusty falchion dashed it from the hand of the assassin, and drank his dastard blood. The innocent girl dropped with a fearful shriek on the ground—there was a sudden pause, then a general rush, and renewed clash of arms, for the garrison having assembled, the citizens were driven out with great slaughter, and pursued a considerable distance towards Bâle. In the mean time, the bride having recovered from her fainting fit, was removed to her chamber, having received no material injury, for it was the life's blood of the citizen which had stained her garments. But who can describe her rapture, in discovering in the person of her preserver, her own dear Sigismund."?

There was a general murmur of indignation against this shameful breach of the laws of hospitality, and in the enthusiasm of the moment, the brave St. Gallen exclaimed—

“ Noble Knights : since the prudent and dignified conduct of the narrator, has prevented you displaying your prowess in the instance for which we assembled, let us embrace the glorious opportunity, which is worthy of our high profession, of redressing wrongs, and guarding female honour; and, joining our forces with those of our late enemy, but now our warm friend, let us march to chastise these offenders against the laws of God and man.”—

An unanimous shout of applause re-echoed through the lofty hall, and Rodolph unexpectedly found himself at the head of the numerous forces which, only a few short hours before, were prepared to invade his territories with fire and sword. Not allowing them time to cool in their

determination, he led them at once towards Bâsle, and was joined in his march, on the following day, by his own troops, as well as those of his friends and allies, including the mountaineers of the three friendly cantons, and the corps from the town of Zurich.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANIMATED with the noble desire of revenging the affronts offered to the hospitable Count of Lauffenburgh, the gallant Knights at length encamped under the castle of the injured chief, where their passions were still more excited, by the actual observation of the disorders committed by the treacherous citizens; and assembling round the mound of earth, under which such of the guests and garrison as had fallen in the bloody affray had been interred, they bound themselves, by a solemn oath, never to sheath their swords until ample satisfaction had been made, by the surrender of the person of the infamous Maurice, and his principal assistants in the late mournful tragedy. At the suggestion of the Abbot of St. Gallen,

the Bishop was included amongst the delinquents, as being the original mover and instigator of this violence of the Burghers, and he was doomed to pay dearly for his malice, despite his specious cunning in withdrawing himself from the castle before the commencement of the affair.

As the noble host ushered his guests into the Baronial hall, they were severally presented to the lovely bride, still pale from the effects of alarm, and slightly disfigured by a wound which she had received on her temple, in falling against the helmet of one of the slain on that fatal night; and if their sense of duty, as Knights, in repairing the outraged honour of one of their order, urged them to undertake this dangerous expedition, the sight of beauty suffering under the effects of that outrage, inflamed them with more ardent feelings of revenge, whilst with loud shouts they vowed to become her champions. Many a gallant youth, excited by the enthusiasm of the scene, burned with ardent desire to

flesh his maiden sword in the protection of female innocence; and many a cup of Rhenish wine was quaffed, to the health of his lady love.

Early on the following morning, the army continued its march along the banks of the far-famed Rhine, with its sea-green transparent waters: at one time mounting with slow and patient step the almost perpendicular ascent, and again, descending the steep declivity; now winding their toilsome course along the well wooded vales; again, admiring the rapid and troubled waters, agitated into many a curling wave, as, pent within narrower and more lofty banks, they rushed with increased velocity over the broken surface of the rocks, and soon again presenting a more placid stream, as the receding banks afforded a wider expanse for their progress.

At length, the distant towers of Bâsle appeared in sight, and Rodolph proceeded with more caution, ordering the Lord of Seckingen to lead the advance, and guard

against any sudden surprise. But terrified at the apparent magnitude of the invading force, as its numerous squadrons and battalions descended the lofty hill, the unhappy Burghers, offering no resistance to their approach, retired within the walls of the town. Selecting the best positions for attack, and arranging the different divisions of his troops, the Count of Hapsburg sent forward a herald, to demand a conference with the Governor, previous to the commencement of hostilities. This request being assented to, on the part of the town, a deputation, headed by the venerable Michael Pottinger, advanced to the Count's head quarters, when Rodolph thus addressed them.—“ It is not my wish, or that of my honourable friends, to injure the innocent inhabitants of the town, but merely to punish the violators of the laws of hospitality, and of the respect due to the assembled Nobles, and more particularly to the delicacy of the female character. If, then, you will at once deliver up the leaders of

the late infamous attack on Lauffenbourg, we will draw off our forces, and proceed to the ulterior objects of the campaign."

Michael Pottinger gravely replied—

"The Council, and the respectable inhabitants of Bâle, are sorely displeased at the conduct of Maurice, and his associates; but since they have claimed protection at their hands, and in consideration of former eminent services, they cannot consent to deliver up their fellow citizens to certain vengeance; at the same time, they are not willing to screen them from the punishment due to their misdeeds, and therefore will engage, on their part, to pay a heavy fine towards defraying the expences of the allied army, and also another considerable sum to the Count of Lauffenbourg, as some compensation for the murder of his relatives and retainers."

These terms being indignantly rejected, the deputies returned in sorrow to the town. Sir Ernest was immediately dispatched to the eastern face, to secure, if possible, the lofty tower, which not only

commanded the works on that quarter, but also the passage of the river; and willing to afford Hugo the desired opportunity of gaining his spurs, entrusted him with the command of a strong detachment, to attempt the occupation of this important post. Frequent were the skirmishes which daily took place between the contending parties, and various was the success.

At length, Hugo observing that the enemy frequently received supplies from the Bishop's country, on the opposite banks of the river, proposed to Sir Ernest, that he should cross over with a select body of men during the night, in a boat which had dropped down from Lauffenbourg, and seizing the vessels on the other side, pass over as if coming with a supply of provisions for the garrison, hoisting a red flag for the usual signal, (as he had invariably remarked it to be done) and whilst the citizens were engaged in taking out the bundles of fodder, which had been placed during the evening in the boats, that he should make

an attempt to seize the tower, which was situated close to the water; whilst Sir Ernest should rapidly advance, with a strong party, and assist in securing the gate. The youthful Knight was delighted with the scheme, and readily gave the desired permission.

All the necessary preparations being completed, Hugo made the attempt, and fortunately succeeded in gaining possession of these important objects, but had (when the enemy discovered the stratagem) a desperate struggle to maintain them, until the rapid advance of Sir Ernest with the main body enabled him to secure his prizes. Hugo himself, with the principal part of his detachment, was wounded in the action.

In the mean time, Sir Rodolph, taking advantage of this unlooked for success, prepared for a general assault, when Andreas Hoffman, the Governor, sensible that his force was not sufficient to resist the superior numbers of the allies, with any chance

of success, proposed a parley; but Rodolph insisted on the immediate surrender of the guilty, and gave them one hour to consider, at the expiration of which period he threatened a general assault. On the departure of the deputies, the Count commanded Hugo to be introduced, and in the presence of his principal officers, complimented him, in the warmest terms, on the daring and successful accomplishment of his enterprise, and promised to bestow on him the high honour of Knighthood on the following day; but being a great admirer of all the forms attending this imposing ceremony, ordered that he should watch the whole of that night in the neighbouring Abbey of Mühldorf.

At the appointed hour the Bâsle deputies arrived, with Maurice and six of his principal accomplices, having ropes round their necks, and their fate was easily read in the dark and stern looks of the Count of Hapsburg. Michael Andreas made one more effort to mitigate the wrath of the

allied chiefs, but without success, for Rodolph at once pronounced their doom.

“You have basely violated the sacred laws of hospitality, on the frivolous pretence of fancied inattention to your merit; have carried dismay and death into the peaceful bosom of a happy family, assembled on the joyous and innocent occasion of the celebration of the nuptials of a daughter of their house; and without any previous preparation, have sent many a soul to answer for its numerous offences. Though you have shewn no mercy to my relatives, in thus hurrying them unprepared to their final account, yet you shall receive more favour at my hands, than you were willing to grant them. When the brilliant orb of to-morrow’s sun shall appear rising above yon lofty mountain, you shall expiate your offences on these towering elms; and, Sir Provost, see that this sentence be executed without fail. In the mean time, admit their confessor, to prepare them for their passage to another world.”

The guards were marching the prisoners to a place of security, when a procession of females, which had issued from the eastern gate, advanced towards the quarters of the Count, whose curiosity was greatly excited, though he could form no conjecture of the cause of their approach. The leader, who was a girl of singular beauty, and modesty of demeanour, carried a basket on her arm, as did also the others, whilst their dishevelled hair floated in the wind. On arriving in front of Rodolph, they knelt at his feet, when their leader addressed him, in the most moving accents—

“ Mercy, generous and noble Knight, on an unhappy maiden, and these her sisters in affliction, whom a severe but just sentence is about to deprive of their fathers, husbands, and brothers. Oh! if you have tender wives and daughters at home, think on the anguish they would experience, were you sentenced to an ignominious death. You have already satisfied your

justice in condemning them; oh! then permit our tears to soften your heart, and dispel all remaining wrath from your bosom, and the memory of your clemency shall live in our grateful remembrance, and the name of Rodolph the just, yet merciful judge, shall be transmitted to our latest posterity. These baskets contain all our wealth and ornaments: accept them as the ransom for the lives of our dear relatives, and allow us the sweet gratification of sacrificing our youthful vanities to our filial love, and of proving that virtue is our noblest ornament."

Struck with this splendid instance of genuine affection, Sir Rodolph tenderly raised the kneeling suppliant, whilst tears of sympathy coursed down the rugged cheeks of himself and his companions, who kindly assisted the other females to rise, and endeavoured to soothe their touching grief. Conferring a few moments with the principal chiefs, Rodolph consented to accept a ransom for the lives of the prisoners,

and to shew his high sense of their piety and noble devotion, permitted them to present themselves to their relatives, as their deliverers from the arms of death. The meeting was indeed affecting, and left scarcely a dry eye in the camp. Their ornaments and other valuables, were restored to the fair owners, who returned with their rescued friends to the town, through the ranks of an admiring army. The amount of the ransom having been settled, to the satisfaction of all parties, the Count engaged, on its receipt, to deliver up the gate and tower, which were still occupied by the troops of Sir Ernest.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE night was far advanced, as Hugo, tired with his exertions of the preceding evening, sat musing on his future prospects, in the venerable church of Mühldorf; presently, he saw two beautiful girls in bridal attire approach, whilst a noble figure, wearing a kingly crown, was observed advancing up the southern aisle, accompanied by two Knights, in their splendid dress of purple, with a gay, and numerous band of friends, and retainers; a holy Friar, who had followed the long train of bridesmaids, now prepared to commence the ceremony, when the royal personage leading one of the Knights forward, presented him to the youngest of the females, standing at the altar; where the Priest, after celebrating mass,

with great pomp, at which all the company assisted with devotion, pronouncing the nuptial benediction, united them in the silken bands of Hymen: and now the beautiful companion of the youthful bride advanced, at the request of the King, to plight her faith to the noble youth on his right—when suddenly, the Friar changed the mild language of christian love, into the dreadful anathemas of the Church; the altar was despoiled of its ornaments; the crosses, the reliques, and the statues of saints, were placed on the ground, and covered over, lest the presence of the excommunicated Knight might profane them, and even the air itself pollute them; and the Friar now pronounced—

“*Let the dogs eat the victuals, which he touches; and let the vessels, which he uses, be purified by fire; let all men shun him, lest they suffer by the contagion of his impiety, until he repents of his sin, in

* Historical form.

opposing the decrees of the Holy Father. The arms which God hath put into our hands are prepared against him."

Suddenly turning, to see what effect this denunciation had produced on the maiden, he beheld the whole scene reversed, and in the place of the bride, and her smiling train, a mournful procession of Nuns, in their sombre habiliments, following a coffin, on which white flowers were strewed, as emblems of the purity, and virgin state of the deceased; and chaunting the solemn supplications for the dead. This sudden change from bridal pomp, and festivity, to the affecting offices of the grave, produced a profound impression on Hugo; his head became confused, his eyes became dim, whilst the chivalrous train, the brilliant blaze of beauty, the dark figures of the nuns, the heavy proportions of the lofty pillars, and the dreary magnificence of the scene, all gradually faded away, and left not a trace behind. Suddenly starting from his dream,

he found the first faint rays of the morning chasing the mists of night away. But still a superstitious feeling, in unison with the gloom of the venerable edifice, oppressed his mind with melancholy forebodings, and he in vain essayed to banish the imaginary characters from his memory.

He had not continued long in his reflections, when the door of the Church was thrown open, and he was summoned by Sir Ernest, to arm for the approaching ceremony; the splendid suit in which he now appeared, was presented by the noble Knight, in testimony of his high esteem, for his devoted attachment, and services, to the ladies of Greiffen, by which they were enabled to escape, from the horrid fate, which awaited them. Arrived at the Castle of Arnheim, under which the Count of Hapsburg was then stationed, Hugo in company with Sir Ernest and the Knights attending his banner, was ushered into his presence, and kneeling at his feet, delivered his sword, when Rodolph administered

the oath* “to serve his Prince, defend his faith, protect the persons and reputations of virtuous ladies, to rescue at the hazard of his life, widows, and orphans, and all unhappy persons, groaning under injustice, and oppression.” Sir Ernest, taking the golden spur, from his own heel, fixed it on that of Hugo, and the Squire and Pages in the absence of the fair sex, fastened the other parts of his armour, and girded on his sword. The Count then concluded the ceremony by giving three gentle strokes with his sword on his shoulder, saying, “in the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I make thee a Knight, be thou loyal, brave, and hardy.”

The deputies having now arrived with the stipulated sum, the Allied Chiefs gave up the tower, and gate, to the Burgher Guard; and the Burghers were invited to attend the banquet held in honour of the occasion of Hugo's accession to his new

* The usual mode.

dignity. He was placed on the right of the Count of Hapsburg, and the princely Abbot, in yielding him precedence, proposed the health of the newly created Knight, declaring, as they were assembled for the purpose of revenging the indignity offered, to the noble bride, of the House of Lauffenbourgh, they should join in bestowing a marked honour on one, who had evinced such courage and address in the female cause. The toast was received and drank with enthusiasm by the guests, for they had all heard with admiration, the detail of the Lady Ethelinda and Matilda's escape, from the power of the Count of Regensberg, by his means.

The evening was concluded with the parting toast of "success to our efforts in punishing the arrogance and malice of the Bishop." The deputies refrained out of respect to their feudal Lord, from joining in this sentiment, but old Michael Pottinger could not help exclaiming, in answer to a question from the Count:—

“ I rather think that these noble Knights will find the broad and rapid Rhine too mighty an adversary, and far more difficult to overcome, than the Eastern tower of Bâsle.”

Sir Rodolph, smiling, replied, “ If the pious Prelate rests his defence on the breadth of the stream, he may find himself miserably deceived, and be compelled to pay dearly for his sins.”

CHAPTER XV.

SECURE in the protection of the Rhine, which separated his territories from the town and dependencies of Bâsle, the Bishop laughed at the impotent anger and threats of the Allied Chiefs, and remaining tranquil in his castle, took no extraordinary precautions, and did not even consider it necessary to assemble a field force; but soon paid dearly for his confidence and presumption, being ignorant of the extraordinary activity and genius of his enterprising adversary.

Marching a considerable body of troops during the night, in the direction of Rheinfelden, Rodolph determined on crossing the river, by means of some portable*

* Historical.

boats, (which made in imitation of those of the Ancient Romans,) he had caused to be transported, with the army, and effected his passage without much difficulty, except from the great velocity of the current, as there was no armed force to oppose him. The haughty Bishop, who had retired to rest on the preceding night, with the pleasing dream, of the idle vanity of Rodolph's hopes, rose with astonishment in the morning, on viewing his fields laid waste, his villages in flames, and his peasantry flying in every direction; but that which caused him the severest pang, was the spectacle of the body of his attached friend Sir Ulric, hanging from a lofty elm in front of the Castle.

It appeared from the information of some of the citizens at Bâsle, that the Bishop had acted by the advice of that Knight, in his nefarious plot, against the House of Lauffenbourgh, and in consequence Sir Rodolph resolved to shew him no mercy, should he fall into his power; arriving at

the first dawn of the morning, under cover of a wood, within a short distance of the walls, the Count directed a select party to advance silently, and endeavour to escalate that part of the rampart, where the works were weaker, in consequence of the danger of the ascent; but the mountaineers accustomed to the difficulties of the rugged Alps, soon surmounted all these lighter obstacles, and gaining the ramparts, secured quiet possession of the place, before the garrison was aware of their entrance.

Unconscious of the knowledge, which the Allies had obtained of his perfidy, Sir Ulric appeared with confidence before the Count of Hapsburg, demanding the treatment due to him as a Knight, and proposing to settle the amount of the ransom, required for his liberation; but the severe aspect of Rodolph, filled him with sinister thoughts, as he sternly exclaimed—

“ I will keep no faith with the violater of the sacred rights of hospitality, and of the respect due to the female character, on

an occasion of so much importance as the marriage ceremony ; and blood for blood shall be paid, that the murdered may be avenged, and rest in peace : Away with the false craven ! let him be suspended to yonder tree, to delight the eyes of his pious master."

In vain Sir Ulric promised an immense sum, as a compensation for the injuries committed, the Count on this occasion was inexorable, for he punished him not only for his wicked advice, but for having infringed his duty and oath as a loyal Knight. As a last demand, the miserable wretch pleaded his rank, saying, " I protest against the mode of punishment, as suited only to a common felon."

The Provost replied, " You are mistaken in your ideas, and complain without a shadow of reason, peculiar respect shall be paid to your dignity, and though you, Sir Knight, have been forgetful of your rank, I will not be so indifferent to your merits, and you shall be exalted above us all."

“ Base caitiff,” exclaimed the enraged Sir Ulric, “ were my hands free, you should bitterly repent of your coarse ribaldry.”

“ Beware, Sir Knight,” the executioner replied, with mock dignity, “ how you provoke my high displeasure, in thus falsely terming my pure wit, ribaldry,—you are besides an unreasonable man, since I am preparing to raise you to a higher station, than your fondest ambition, even in its wildest dreams, ever aspired to reach ; it is difficult to please every body.”

The Knight gnashed his teeth in impotent rage, and on passing two or three of his equals, loudly demanded, “ if they would allow their Order to be disgraced ? ” to which the Provost replied,—

“ Be under no concern in this respect, as I will divest you of all your insignia, and useless trappings ; you shall rival even the mighty Charlemagne, in the simplicity of your dress.”

“ You may yet, be well paid for your insolence,” fiercely exclaimed Sir Ulric.

“ Noble Sir, your words are as true, as those of a prophet, for your excellent armour, will more than repay my labours.”

They had now arrived at the foot of the fatal tree, when the Knight was stripped without much ceremony, of his warlike habit, and the spurs were torn from his heels; and as the noose was slipped round his neck, large drops of perspiration hung on his sun-burnt brow. The difficulty was how to suspend him to the top of the tree, as he was a heavy man, and his struggles would impede their operations, the plan therefore was adopted, of hanging him on a lower branch, and when dead, raising the body by means of ropes to the top of the tree.

On marching through the town of Carlsberg, Rodolph was accosted by a substantial burgher, who, in the deep accents of grief, demanded justice from him, in his character of a Knight, as the avenger of

female wrongs; and being received with great kindness, related the cause of his sorrow.—

“ My child Rosalinda, about two years ago, being then in her sixteenth year, was invited to a grand entertainment, given, on the occasion of his daughter’s marriage, by Sir Arnold, Lord of the Castle of Carlsberg. My child is fair to look at, and bears a strong resemblance to her sainted mother, who was distinguished by the appellation of ‘ the rose of Carlsberg.’ Struck with her appearance, Sir Arnold paid her marked attention during the three days which the fête lasted; and, as may be naturally supposed, made some impression on a youthful imagination, for he is still young, and alike celebrated for his figure and ardent courage.

“ A few days after the return of Rosa to her paternal roof, Sir Arnold called, in company with his daughter, to whom she had been presented at the Castle, and again invited her to accompany the Lady Ermenda. Pleased with the opportunity of introducing

her to such society, I readily consented to the proposal;—after protracting her visit for a considerable period, she returned home, and it grieved me to see, that the magnificence and constant gaities of the Castle, had rendered her discontented with our simple mode of life.

“On questioning Rosa, as to the nature of Sir Arnold’s attentions, it was evident from her modest downcast looks, and the deep blush which suffused her countenance, that love had been the chief and most frequent subject of their conversation. I therefore determined, before permitting the renewal of this dangerous intercourse, to ascertain the real sentiments and intentions of the Knight, and, relying on the good sense, affection, and the pure principles of my daughter’s mind, I pointed out the propriety of the measures which I proposed to adopt; she readily promised to submit herself implicitly to my wishes, on every point.

“Sir Arnold frequently called, and evi-

dently appeared discontented at not meeting with Rosalinda, for whom he always enquired very tenderly; at length, his daughter paid another visit, and expressing great regard for Rosa, invited her to spend the ensuing month at the Castle. I immediately embraced the opportunity, of explaining the danger of introducing a young female in her situation, to the mansion of a single man of such high rank; and that observations had already been made by my neighbours, on the frequent visits of her father at my house. The Lady Ermenda acknowledged the force and propriety of my observations, yet added, that Rosa would be under her protection, and that Sir Arnold always spoke of her in public in terms of warm yet honourable affection; then, saluting my child, she departed, saying that she still expected her at Carlsberg.

“ On the following day, Sir Arnold himself arrived, and expressing the warmest sentiments of regard for my daughter, said that she was calculated to adorn any sta-

tion, and finally demanded permission to pay his addresses to her. This conduct being manly and open, there was no longer cause for doubt and suspicion, and Rosa joined the party assembled at the Castle. Sanctioned by my permission, she soon surrendered her heart to the insinuating addresses of her lover, who preserved all the delicacy of an honourable respect, until he imagined that his power was so complete over her feelings, that she would willingly consent to accept of an humbler situation than that of wife, in his splendid establishment. It was some time before a being so pure and innocent fully comprehended the nature of his infamous proposals, but when at last the painful suspicion darted through her mind, the colour fled from her cheek, the life blood was chilled at her heart, and she remained the motionless statue of a villain's deceptive arts. Alarmed at his work, and fearing that her reason was gone, he flew to bring his daughter to her assistance, who, tenderly

bestowing all those endearing attentions, with which a delicate mind succeeds in winning confidence, and allowing nature silently to resume her functions, at length succeeded in restoring my poor child to her senses, and then instantly attended her to my house.

“For twelve months Sir Arnold employed entreaty, and stratagem, to obtain an interview; at the same time disavowing all intention of insulting her honour, and proposing to unite himself to her, by the most sacred ties; but I gave a deaf ear to all his threats and soothings. My daughter’s health was much impaired, from her long confinement to the house, and she lately ventured again to enjoy the exercise of riding, in the immediate vicinity of the town; but always attended by a good escort, to prevent any attempt on the part of the Lord of Carlsberg: But yesterday, as she was riding at her usual pace, a numerous party, which had lain in ambuscade, suddenly rushed out, and

overpowering her attendants, carried her off, in spite of their desperate resistance ; and two of my friends having visited the castle on business, met her, in a state of pitiable despair, entering the grand gate."

Sir Rodolph, with his usual benignity, promised the Burgher his interference ; at the same time demanding some references as to his character, and general reputation for prudence, and veracity.—In a few minutes the two principal Magistrates arrived, and fully confirmed his statement ; moreover, adding that Hubert Fuesch was a member of the great Council ; was descended of a noble family, which in consequence of some persecutions, had emigrated from Brandenburg, and settled at Carlsberg ; that he possessed great wealth, and was universally respected.

After exacting heavy contributions on the Bishop's account, Rodolph continued his march, and at length arrived at the Benedictine Monastery of Hustein, situated on the banks of a small lake,

immediately opposite the Castle of Carlsberg; finding, from the apparent strength of the works, that no impression could be made without a regular siege, which would enable the Bishop to collect his forces, he was at a loss how to proceed in the affair, when accident suggested the means.

A boat crossed over with two of Sir Arnold's retainers, demanding the presence of one of the Fathers, to attend, and afford spiritual aid to a young lady, whose health was in a precarious state. Rodolph immediately proposed sending his own confessor Father Jerome, who was of the Benedictine order, dressed in the habiliments of a soldier under his gown; and when admitted, that he should display a ring, which Fuesch gave him for the purpose, as sufficient warrant of his faith; and then disguising Rosa, who was tall of stature, in the Monk's dress, and drawing the hood over her face, he himself in the garb of the soldier, should walk carelessly

out, as if ordered to attend the Friar to the boat; whilst, to prevent any interruption on the part of Sir Arnold, a strong body of troops should approach the castle on the land side, so as to draw his attention to its hostile movements.

Every thing succeeded admirably; for as the Monk entered the water gate, an alarm was given that the enemy was approaching in force; the entire garrison was hastily assembled; and the Knight, who was waiting to have some conversation before the Friar took his leave, was obliged to repair to the outworks, as the enemy having burnt several cottages in their immediate vicinity, exhibited serious intentions of storming them. Aware of the value of time, Father Jerome seized the critical moment; and walking in front of the supposed Friar, advanced to the boat, happily without any interruption, and seating himself with his fair companion, pulled away vigorously from the

shore, as Sir Arnold's Squire came running down the steps, which led from the castle, and called out—

“Sir Priest! Sir Priest! my Lord would hold some converse with you, when he is more at leisure.”

Being still within bow shot, Jerome thought it prudent to answer for the supposed Priest—

“I will return immediately, Sir Squire; but my presence is now particularly required at the monastery.”

The good Father then pulled away with all his strength, and reached the opposite side in safety; where the pure maiden found refuge in her affectionate father's arms, who trusted that her bodily strength would soon return, as her mental agonies had now ceased. The delighted Burgher presented his recovered treasure, to her noble deliverer, who readily acknowledged, that she truly inherited her deceased mother's claim to the title of “the Rose of Carlsberg;” and fearing that her exquisite

beauty, might induce Sir Arnold, to make a second attempt to secure her person, he offered the worthy Fuesch a temporary asylum in his territories, until he could insure his Rosa's safety, by her marriage with some man, able to protect her.

Sincerely thanking him for his considerate offer, Gregory assured him, that once more secure in his own house, the Knight would not presume to use open violence; and that it was yet doubtful whether he would even escape punishment, as the Burghers had determined to demand satisfaction, for the insult offered to one of their own body; and the fear of exciting the jealousy of the allied army, had alone prevented them assembling their troops that very morning—but he would accept of his protection until the following day.

When the boat had neared the shore, an order had been dispatched for the recall of the troops; and as the evening now began to close, lights were observed, flying in every direction through the castle—the

escape, therefore, of the prisoner had been discovered. Sir Arnold had remarked to Father Jerome, that his face appeared strange to him—to which the Monk had coolly replied, that it was very possible; as having been long absent, he had only just returned to the abbey—The Knight having no reason for suspicion, had made no further observation; but passed on towards the outworks.

The fate of his confidential adviser, had deeply affected the proud Bishop; and, fear that this salutary example of Rodolph's justice, might be an earnest of his own lot, should success attend his operations, lowered his haughty pride, and confidence; and obliged him, though with considerable reluctance, to entreat for a short respite, in order to enter into the necessary negotiations. His Commissioners, however, obtained this favour with considerable difficulty, and not until the allies had over-run, and plundered, his whole territory; when re-crossing the

river with their rich spoils, they left the mortified Prelate to lament over his losses, and to prepare himself for the vigorous exactions, which they intended to propose, as a punishment for his unprincipled conduct.

Having resumed his former encampment before the walls of Bâsle, and secured his portable boats, Rodolph awaited the Commissioners, who arrived in a few days after, and being invested with full powers by the Bishop, consented to pay a large sum of money as a compensation for the affair at Lauffenbourgh, and also agreed to reimburse the allies, for all the heavy expences of the war. The Envoys, however, made a vigorous opposition to the large amount of the latter demand, stating, with much shew of reason, “the great damage which had been committed, throughout the whole principality, the heavy sums which had already been received in contribution, and finally, the very impoverished state of the Prelate’s finances.” To

all these objections, Sir Rodolph simply replied—

“Those who commit injuries, must atone for them, however great the penalty; and unless the money is paid within the stipulated time, I will storm the Bishop’s castle, and possibly may be enabled to find a tree, as lofty as that on which Sir Ulric cut his capers.”

The Envoys reluctantly consented, to such convincing arguments. But when it was proposed, that the Bishop should abandon all claim, to the nomination of the Abbot of Rheinfelden, and transfer his rights to the Lord of St. Gallen, the rage of the Commissioners exceeded all bounds, and they unanimously declared, that they would rather consent, that the Count of Hapsburg himself should enjoy that right; and that they must at once break off the treaty. Sir Rodolph calmly replied—

“I prefer an amicable settlement to a violent one, and will therefore allow you

twenty-four hours consideration; but at the same time advise you, as a friend, to consent with a good grace to an act of necessity, as it will grieve me to employ force."

On the following day, the terms were finally arranged, the Abbot of St. Gallen, to facilitate the treaty, generously agreeing that the nomination should be made alternately.

The first instalment having been paid down, was divided amongst the chiefs, who now passed their time, in the enjoyment of the simple amusements which the city afforded. But the military discipline of the camp, was by no means neglected, as the Count was a strict disciplinarian, and even in the most tranquil periods, took all the necessary precautions against a surprise; but at the present moment, it was particularly necessary to be on his guard, as the Bishop was smarting under his demands. To prevent the troops suffering from the effects of idleness, he employed

them in all the manly exercises, so necessary to form the model of a good soldier, and occasionally instructed them, in the useful art of forming intrenchments, and throwing up works for the protection of the camp, imitating in this respect the ancient Romans, who invariably, on arriving on their new ground, (even if they proposed remaining only one night,) carefully fortified their camp. In consequence of his high military reputation, crowds of young men joined his force, as the best school for attaining knowledge and experience in the art of war.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATIGUED with the labours of the day, both mental and bodily, the Count of Hapsburg retired as a private individual to his couch, from whence, in a few short hours, he was to arise as the mighty Emperor of Germany. Conscious of the value of time on such an important occasion, and anxious that his uncle should be enabled to strengthen his interest, before the defeated candidate could have an opportunity of counteracting his acknowledgment by the Pope, Frederic of Hohenzollern rode day and night, until he arrived, one hour after midnight, at Bâle, and hastening at once to the tent of the Count, awoke him without ceremony, and announced his election as "King of the Romans."

Aroused so suddenly from his slumbers, and scarcely yet awake, the Count of Hapsburg, impatiently checked the ill-timed pleasantry of his nephew.

“Arouse yourself, my Lord,” Frederic said, “your reason yet slumbers: think you that I would almost ride myself to death, on a fool’s errand, in order to laugh at the phantom Emperor. The inhabitants of Nurenberg, forsooth, would be highly pleased at their Burgrave playing the part of the fool, in such an unmeaning comedy. But now, that your eyes appear more open, I again seriously declare, that the Electors have unanimously nominated you ‘King of the Romans,’ and have rejected the most powerful sovereign in Europe, in your favour. I allude to Ottocarus, King of Bohemia. But if you doubt my word, here are my credentials, (producing several letters from a bag concealed under his cloak); the first, is from the head of the Electoral College, your old acquaintance Werner, the perusal of whose letter, will

probably suffice for the present, and carry conviction to your mind."

Cutting the silken string which secured the letter, Rodolph commenced the difficult task of deciphering the contents, for though the hand was clear and legible, being executed by the Archbishop's learned secretary, yet being no great clerk himself, although a great patron and admirer of the arts, and of learned men, some time elapsed, before he perfectly succeeded in ascertaining the truth of Frederic's communication. The latter, who had amused himself with his uncle's embarrassment, now presented a second epistle, with mock gravity, at the same time maliciously exhibiting four others, to the Count's dismay, who complaining of the dimness of the lamp, declared that he would defer perusing them until daylight. Frederic now related all the particulars of the negotiation, the great interest which Werner had exhibited in his favour, and finally, the treaty, which he had himself negotiated,

in regard to the marriage of his daughters with the three Electors.

“But, Sir Rodolph, you have not yet consented to accept this splendid offer. If you think the weight of the jewelled crown will press too heavily on your head, the Electors must find a more robust supporter of the Imperial dignity.”

The whole transaction had appeared, at first, like a vision of romance, but now being fully impressed with its reality, the elated Emperor pressed his affectionate nephew to his bosom; and being a pious man, poured out his grateful praises, and thanks to that Supreme Being, to whose protecting Providence, he was indebted for all his former successes, and which by enabling him to display his talents for government, both civil and military, had paved the way, for his present elevation to this exalted dignity.

The news* was immediately circulated

* Historical.

through the camp, creating an extraordinary sensation, and at an early hour, the assembled Chieftains saluted their gallant Commander as "King of the Romans," and tendered their powerful support, to secure him in his situation. The citizens of Bâsle threw open their gates, admitting him at the head of his troops into their town. Proclaiming his title, and determining to shew a more substantial proof of their esteem and satisfaction, they presented him with a very considerable largess, to meet the expenses of his coronation: and not content with these demonstrations of their friendship, afterwards erected a wooden statue to his honour, in the courtyard of the house in which he dwelt during his residence at Bâsle.

Enraged at the elevation of his successful rival, the haughty prelate exclaimed, "sit fast, great God, in your seat, or Rodolph will take your place;" but dreading his increase of power, thought it prudent to perform all the articles of the treaty, and paid

the money demanded, yet would not condescend to congratulate him on his accession.

In consequence of the private agreement with the Electors, Sir Rodolph deemed it necessary to dispatch an order for the Empress and her three eldest daughters to join him, and deputed Sir Ernest to escort them, and make the necessary preparations for their comfort and convenience, on the route. He was commissioned, at the same time, to announce his elevation to the Swiss towns in amity with him, and to collect as numerous a force as circumstances would permit, as he was confident that Ottocar would attempt to set aside his election by force of arms. Sir Frederic of Ustar was entrusted with the delicate mission of obtaining the Pope's confirmation of his appointment.

But though engaged in such weighty affairs, he never forgot his promises, or lost sight of that humanity which distinguished his character, in every thing that related to

the dignity and comfort of the fair sex, and he impressively commanded Sir Ernest to pay, in his name, every attention which delicacy could dictate to the widowed situation of the Lady of Greiffen, and to see her reinstated in her Castle. On Sir Hugo, whom he declared he could ill spare at this critical moment, he conferred the commission of his Representative in the Alpine regions, having the greatest reliance on his honour, integrity, and talents.

It may easily be imagined, that Sir Ernest made not the slightest objection to his confidential commission, but hastened to proceed on his route, and within one hour after the receipt of his final orders, he was on full march for Hapsburg, at the head of his faithful retainers. Visions of love and ambition danced before his heated imagination; the favour and friendship of the Emperor opened a new career to his hopes—yet if dreaming of higher honours and rank, it arose not from a selfish feeling, but from the pure desire of raising the lovely Matilda

to a station which she was so well calculated to adorn: yet a melancholy dread of some fearful obstacle would steal unconsciously over his mind, and cloud his brilliant hopes with gloom; and he almost determined to comply with the encreasing demands of the Pope, regarding the Abbot's appointment, but then again the support of the Emperor, which he had no doubt of obtaining, confirmed him in his opposition, besides, the injustice of the claim militated against his ideas of equity, and, conscious that he was merely supporting his undeniable rights, he was unwilling to abandon them to avarice, and the encroachment of the Church; he yet, however, relied on the amiable frankness of disposition, and the well known moderation of Gregory, that he would not push the dispute to extremities, but consent to some compromise. The noble youth calculated too much on the forbearance of the Pontiff, for though Gregory himself was a just man, and possibly formed a correct opinion on this subject,

yet his minister was grasping and avaricious, and would by no means permit the rich appointment to escape him, particularly as Rodolph would not dare to interpose, in consequence of his appointment being so recent.

On the following day, Sir Hugo, having been detained by the Emperor on some important business, joined his friend on the march, and the conversation naturally turned on their future prospects, Sir Ernest congratulating his companion in having obtained the confidence of Rodolph, as it would probably ensure some provision, to enable him to support his rank as a Knight.

“ But have you no expectations from your friends, Sir Hugo? it has long been my wish to make the enquiry, but delicacy has prevented me hitherto; if, then, no mystery hangs over your fate, it will afford me great satisfaction to learn your history, and more particularly as the late Sir Herman more than once assured me, that you bore the most striking resemblance to his

old companion in arms, Sir William of Altenburgh, who, if I am not much mistaken, was treacherously attacked and slain by the united force of some confederated Barons."

Sir Hugo replied—"Having lately experienced such convincing proofs of your sincere regard, I will not hesitate to confide to you some of the particulars of my early fate, and also, that the principal cause of my delay in the camp, was for the purpose of establishing claims to my title and paternal lands, in which, by the kindness and justice of the Emperor, and the Lordly Abbot of St. Gallen, I may venture to say I have succeeded." (After relating the circumstances of the attack, which have already been mentioned, he proceeded)—"I had just attained my ninth year, and well remember how the clash of arms went like a wound to my heart, for I was uncertain whether some of the blows had not killed my father: the noise continued, and, falling on my knees, I prayed to God to protect

my dear parents ; but at this moment, the good Walther Eschenback, my father's principal Squire, seizing me by the arm, hurried me along the corridors, and descending a dark staircase, we found two men with a lantern, waiting for us. Proceeding in silence, the shouts and clashing of arms became fainter and fainter, until they entirely died away. I naturally thought the tumult was over, but Walther assured me, that being a considerable depth, below the foundations of the castle, we could no longer hear what was taking place above. After continuing our gradual descent, we at length arrived at a small door, which was opened with some difficulty, though Charles had well oiled the keys ; creeping through the low arch, the light having been previously extinguished, we found ourselves in the open air, in the midst of thick shrubs, which impeded our course, but shortly after arrived at the bottom of the hill, and then proceeded rapidly towards the Rhine,

which we fortunately crossed on the following morning, in a fishing boat. I was very tired, but good Walther, and the other men frequently carried me a short distance. Having crossed the river, my Protector, considering that we were out of the immediate danger of pursuit, determined to refresh the party at a keeper's lodge, in the forest of Krotzingen, where Walther had before frequently lodged, on his route to Apenzell, the place of our destination, and which we at length reached in safety, where we found a ready and hearty reception in the house of my protector's father, who was a rich Burgher, and one of the great council.

“ Now that the excitement, occasioned by our rapid flight, had subsided, my grief at the loss of my beloved parents, burst forth with renewed violence, as I recalled to my remembrance, the thousand instances of their affection, and my heart grieved, when considering, how often I had received their fond caresses with coldness, how

often I had neglected their commands, and numerous instances of ingratitude, now that they were dead and gone, crowded on my troubled mind; but my dear guardian, after allowing the first emotions to pass away in a flood of tears, soothed my sorrow, and endeavoured to make me forget my loss, by employing me in various occupations.

“ Years passed away, during which I had received the best instruction Apenzell afforded, and had become expert in all martial exercises; when I had attained my sixteenth year, the city, in consequence of severe taxation, and arbitrary government, having shaken off its allegiance, was threatened with an attack by its princely superior the Abbot of St. Gallen, assisted by several of the neighbouring Barons; and the troops under Walther, marched out to support our independance. I also accompanied him on my first campaign; the success was various, but in the last and decisive action, my generous protector received his death wound. I found

him under a tree, with his head leaning on the shoulder of an old servant, who was kneeling, and supporting him; he was shot through the breast with an arrow, and already appeared as pale as a corpse; a faint smile passed over his countenance, as I gently pressed his hand, and regarding me with a look of deep affection, he said—

“ ‘Hugo, seven years have elapsed, since I became your protector, and I have never had cause to repent of my kindness, for you have indeed behaved to me as an affectionate son, but my time is short—you will receive from my father, several valuable articles, which formerly belonged to your noble parent, which you will find useful in asserting your claims to the broad lands of Altenburgh—but I have taken secure means to ensure your future succession, and have lodged the necessary documents in the archives of the town.’

“ His voice became fainter, and recommending me to persevere in the paths of virtue, and regarding me once more with a

kind parting look, he expired in the act of commending himself to his Creator. The body was buried in the principal church, and the magistrates, and citizens, attended the funeral, to pay the last honours, to the memory of their gallant commander. The trumpets sounded so melancholy, that I seem to hear them even yet. Deep and sincere was my sorrow at the loss of my second father, and many even of the rugged soldiers dashed a tear from their eyes, for he was universally beloved. Peace was again proclaimed, but the town having failed in asserting its infant liberties, was obliged to submit to the Abbot.

“ The Count of Montfort, who had joined the forces of Apenzell, with his retainers, previous to his departure, proposed to take me as his Page, and easily obtained the permission of Walther’s father. The terms were soon settled, and I departed with my new Lord, who had also engaged Charles, and Leopold, the two faithful attendants of my flight. I remained a considerable

period with him, having previously to his death, been raised to the rank of his Squire; we were frequently engaged in combat, and the Count, pleased with my courage and conduct, promised to knight me on the first favourable occasion. You are already acquainted with all the other events of my life, from my introduction into the family of the late Sir Herman, unto the present moment.

“You will naturally demand, why I did not assert my claims, when in possession of all the documents, but a moment’s reflection will clear the mystery. On the fall of Sir Udo, the Count of Regensberg maintained possession of Altenburg, and its demesnes, and experienced no opposition from the Bishop of Strasburg, in consequence of acknowledging him for his Superior, doing homage for the fiefs, and supporting a strong body of men at arms for his service. On the first intelligence, however, of the Count’s disasters, the Bishop entertaining scruples of conscience,

on the legality of Lutold's right and title to the rich inheritance, seized the castle until the question could be determined. What hope had I, a simple Squire, of contending against such powerful adversaries ; but now that I have attained that Rank, which my birth entitles me to hold, and have conciliated the favour, and support of the Lord of St. Gallen, and other powerful nobles, and have moreover been authorized to assume, by the Emperor's command, the title of Altenburg, the Princely Prelate shall soon be compelled to acknowledge the justice of my claims, and to disgorge the rich plunder."

Sir Ernest thanked his friend for this interesting communication, and offered his powerful assistance, in obtaining his property ; and now the lofty towers of Hapsburg appeared in the distance, the sweet power of love assumed its influence, and the promise of again joining the banner of the Emperor, would have cost the youthful lover many a bitter pang, had he not

consoled himself with the expectation, that the Empress would probably invite Matilda to accompany her, and form part of her regular court. He would then enjoy frequent opportunities, of meeting his promised bride; and independent of selfish considerations, the change, in removing her from the immediate scene of her recent distresses, would probably have a beneficial effect on her health and spirits.

Having now arrived within a short distance of the gates, Sir Ernest considered it respectful to dispatch Sir Hugo, to announce his near approach, as the Emperor's Envoy. In those remote periods, intelligence of events, did not travel so rapidly as at present, and when the Wardour demanded, who required the gates to be opened? he was rather surprised at hearing the name of Sir Hugo, Count of Altenburg, with news from the Emperor. The honest man knew Hugo, as the Squire of the late Sir Herman, but how he could be at once transformed into the Count of

Altenburg, was beyond his comprehension ; then, where ? and who was the Emperor ? The varlet had not much time for reflection, as the order to open the gates in the name of the Emperor, was repeated in a thundering tone ; and seeing, at the same time, the troops of Sir Ernest, just emerging from the wood, he began to imagine it all to be a dream ; but as the object before him was certainly Hugo, he thought that there was no danger in complying. He stared, however, with perfect astonishment, as Sir Hugo entered, armed *cap-à-piè*, with his golden spurs attached, and demanded to be presented immediately to the Empress. Seeing that he was likely to obtain no answer from the Wardour, who appeared bereft of his senses, he dismounted, giving his horse to Charles, whom he had appointed his Squire, in consequence of his long and faithful services, and ascending the steps, was soon ushered into the presence of the ladies ; whom he found assembled in the gallery, where Emme-

line was amusing them with her lute and song.

Hearing the noise of the huge doors suddenly thrown open, and the clanking of the Knight's iron heel on the paved floor, she hastily turned, and instantly recognizing the features of the visitor, flew to welcome him, exclaiming—

“ Well, dearest Hugo, what magician has metamorphosed your iron breast-plate and plain steel cap, into this beautiful polished armour, with these nodding plumes, and golden spurs, forsooth! why you will win all the maiden's hearts; but do not flatter yourself, it will be no great conquest, as all our warriors are absent.” A deep blush, at the expressions she had so unwittingly uttered, told that at least one heart was prepared to acknowledge his power, and the fear that her countenance betrayed, what her heart really felt, rendered her at once silent; whilst Hugo, reading her feelings in the

eloquent expression of her features, answered with a glance, which carried conviction to her mind, and advanced to the end of the gallery, when making a profound obeisance, he addressed the Countess in a respectful tone.

“I, Sir Hugo, Count of Altenburg, am deputed by the noble Baron of Grunengen, to announce his near approach, to congratulate your Majesty, on the part of the Emperor, on your accession to the Imperial dignity.”

Gertrude Anne was inclined to laugh; but the change of Hugo's simple habit as a Squire, to the splendid armour of a Knight, and the evident seriousness of his demeanour, at once explained that some great event had happened. Then turning to Sir Hugo, she demanded from whom the Baron of Grunengen came.—“From the late Count of Hapsburg, now King of the Romans;” answered the Knight.

“Surely my bold husband has not been

rash enough to declare himself 'King of the Romans' without proper authority, and support?"

"The noble Count," replied Hugo, "has been unanimously chosen by the Electors of the Empire, in regular Council assembled, and is now only waiting at Bâsle for your arrival, with the Princesses, in order to proceed to Aix-la-Chapelle, to be inaugurated."

The horn of the Wardour loudly echoed through the castle, and every preparation of ceremony (which the shortness of the time admitted) having been made to receive the Envoy, (for Sir Rodolph, though simple in his dress, and general conduct, highly approved of magnificence on state occasions,) Sir Ernest, attended by a numerous suite of Knights, entered, and offered his congratulations, on her elevation to the imperial throne; and then presented, with the usual compliments, the letters, with which he was entrusted by the Emperor.

The recognition of the lovers was merely confined to a few tender glances, for Sir Ernest being in a public capacity, and surrounded by a numerous body of strangers, could not devote much attention to Matilda, particularly as the guests were soon summoned to the Banquet; and made the spacious hall re-echo with their merri-ment.

CHAPTER XVII.

MATILDA and Emmeline occupied the same apartment, and as they retired early from the saloon, generally conversed on the occurrences of the day; but on the present evening, contrary to their usual custom, they both appeared deeply absorbed in thought. Emmeline, usually the most lively, and engrossing the greatest share of conversation, now preserved silence, and appeared deeply engaged in destroying the nosegay, which she had worn in her bosom, and scattering the leaves about the room, whilst her sister sat intently watching the varying changes of her expressive countenance: at length her colour was suddenly heightened, a brilliant smile played over

her features, and she scarce restrained her laughter.

“ My dearest Emmeline,” said Matilda, “ something very amusing seems to occupy your thoughts. I trust you will not be selfish, and retain it to yourself.”

“ Dearest Sister, you are so correct, and so serious on the subject of female propriety, that I almost fear, you will read me a lecture on my flighty ideas; but really I do take shame to myself, in running to greet your dear friend Hugo on his arrival. The man, I fear, will flatter himself with vain hopes, for he gave me such a look, that it really brought the colour to my face; but you know, dearest Sister, that I only notice him in consequence of his noble behaviour, to my affectionate mother and yourself.”

“ We ought to feel very much flattered at your great regard for us, since it induces you to do such violence to your feelings, and to overpass the line of female decorum; and indeed I am not much

surprized at Sir Hugo letting you know, how highly honoured he felt, at this decided proof of your preference.”

“ Now you are indeed severe, dearest Matilda; you are surely not in earnest, and cannot seriously imagine, that Sir Hugo would presume to address me so publicly.”

“ The tongue may be silent, Emmeline, but have you never heard of the eyes speaking? I certainly should give you credit, for being an apt scholar in reading the meaning of their expression. I however can understand this silent language, and clearly perceive the nature of your feelings; and it does indeed afford me great pleasure, that Sir Hugo’s rank entitles him to address you as a lover.”

The trembling girl buried her head in her Sister’s bosom, whilst Matilda threw her arms around her: Now, my dearest love, since you have made me your confidant, I shall pardon your indiscretions; but

you have not yet explained the cause of your sudden laugh?"

Emmeline raised her head, whilst the pearly tear glistened in her eye, and smiling, replied—"I will confess all my sins, without any reserve: in the first place, I was musing on the reason of the gentleman's arrogant looks, and the warm expression of his eyes, for hitherto I have always considered him a modest, discreet youth, coming when called, and almost blushing, when addressed by a female; but as my eyes fell under his glance, they rested on the golden spurs, and the mystery was at once solved. There must be something magical in those three strokes over the shoulder, for the moment a youth receives them, he imagines himself a superior being, and that every woman is ready to fall into his arms, if he condescends to look at her; but my gentleman shall find my spirit rather too lofty, and he must bow the knee to me." (And she threw her head back,

casting a proud look of conscious superiority around.)

“ But the cause of the laugh, my sweet Emme ? ”

“ Oh ! the trifle almost escaped my memory. I was considering his looks, my own foolish blush, and then the recollection of the contrast between the impassioned language of his eyes, and the solemn gravity of his outward demeanour, as he advanced like a stately peacock with its tail spread out towards Gertrude Anne, the Empress I should say, (I am afraid I should be too familiar for a Court) this caught my fancy, and made me laugh at the absurd idea of love, which for the moment had occupied my thoughts.”

“ Yet Sir Ernest was still more cold and dignified, and you cannot accuse him of being deficient in tenderness.”

“ Your curiosity will be gratified soon, for before leaving the hall, the proud youth did contrive to whisper some imper-

tinence about to-morrow : perhaps I shall not gratify him."

"What! not to satisfy my curiosity, Emmeline?"

"For your sake certainly. I dare say you are dying to learn all the particulars of the Count's election to this high dignity, and common politeness will necessarily induce me to ask, how the simple Squire Hugo, has become Sir Knight of Altenburg."

"Thanks, dearest love, and may our Patron Saint reward you for your kind intentions, but as you are fond of Romance, and dear Ernest will probably supply all the information regarding the Emperor, I would advise you to confine your attention to the interesting tale of the golden spurs."

"But, dearest Matilda, the arrival of your lover does not appear to have raised your spirits. What melancholy anticipations of evil, do you entertain? Does he

look ill? or has he not pined enough, during his absence from his lady love? Perhaps he has thought more of his appetite, than his mistress, and has grown too fat."

"Spare your raillery, my Emmeline, my spirits are not so volatile as your own; and besides, one moment's reflection, will make you confess, that the position of Ernest is every hour becoming more critical, in consequence of his dispute with the Church; but I shall exert all my influence to persuade him, to relax in his useless opposition, as it will only entail misery and danger on us both. Can you then be surprised, that mournful sensations should occasionally steal over me, and cloud my present joy? Yet, though my features may not correctly express the sentiment, my heart beats with the strong pulsation of pure delight, at the return of one, to whom I have plighted my vows, not at the command of a stern and cold parent, or from selfish motives of personal aggrandizement, (for my rank and property equal

his own,) but from the inward conviction, after a long acquaintance with his character, and disposition, that he is eminently qualified to ensure my future happiness."

Joining her hands together in the attitude of supplication, the beautiful girl replied—

" You must pardon my folly—my intentions were indeed innocent. It pains me to have caused you a moment's grief; but my disposition is indeed too volatile. But I sincerely hope, that Ernest's love, may equal that which I entertain towards you. You were always my superior, both in bodily and mental endowments, and guided by reflection and judgment, act from fixed principles; whilst I, driven by the passing feeling of the moment, seize on every trifling object of amusement, and like the inconstant fluttering butterfly, lightly sip the various sweets of life; but you resembling the more prudent bee, when you find a treasure, drink deeply of its contents, and lay up a good store for future use."

“ You are a dear and affectionate girl,” Matilda replied, throwing her arms around her neck, “ but are not a faithful portrait painter, since your whole conduct displays the beauty, but not the unsteadiness of the butterfly.”

“ You encourage me in my flighty conduct, by your unmerited praise,” Emmeline replied, tenderly kissing the polished forehead of Matilda.

Long and sincere was the embrace of the lovely sisters, who, in all the freshness of their youthful purity and innocence, fell into that deep and quiet slumber, which many of those, whose brows are encircled by a kingly crown, seek, but seek in vain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIR Hugo was leaning on the frame of the huge bay window, meditating on the change which one short month had made in his feelings, and fortunes, when a light step attracted his attention, and concealing himself in the deep recess, he awaited in silence, the approach of some fair maiden, who apparently in vexation, at not finding the individual she was in quest of, pettishly said—

“How tedious these great men are! they are so puffed up with their own importance, that they consider us ordinary mortals, beneath their notice, and fly to some secret retirement, where they can converse, with what is more suitable to their dignity, their own wise thoughts.”

She had now arrived at the recess, and observing Sir Hugo, started back, uttering a faint scream, and attempting to fly, but the Knight was too quick, and tenderly taking her hands, detained the willing victim.

“ May I be permitted, noble Lady, to enquire, who has the good fortune to engage the thoughts of one so fair ? ”

“ The question is easily answered, mighty Sir ; feeling my spirits at a low ebb, I was desirous of meeting some pompous Grandee, to exercise my poor wit on. ”

“ May I presume, fair enslaver of hearts, to demand the name of this happy gentleman ? ”

“ Noble Sir, my memory is treacherous ; but it is the Count of some imaginary castle in the clouds, I cannot now remember the outlandish name. But your looks are big with the fate of woods, and I will not interrupt your useful calculations, on the number of trees in yonder forest, and

will therefore bid your Lordship adieu"—at the same moment endeavouring to disengage her hand; but Hugo, exchanging his look of delight and merriment, into one of tenderness, detained the now abashed girl, saying—

“ I could not view such matchless perfections, sweetest Emmeline, unmoved. You have long reigned supreme in my heart; and if I have abstained from pleading my passion, it has arisen from the mystery, which from imperious circumstances, was attached to my birth; but since the motives which induced me to conceal it, no longer exist, and as the Count of Altenburg, I am entitled to appear as the suitor of a lady of your rank, I hope, my sweet Emmeline, you will not render all my fond hopes illusory, but will, with your hand, bestow the treasure of your heart.”

“ My mother, Sir, my sister, are indeed grateful”—

“ It is not your mother’s, or even your sister’s gratitude, dearest, but your own sweet heart, that I humbly demand.”

The answer was whispered in a sigh ; and, it may be presumed, that it was favorable, since the enamoured Knight repaid it with a kiss on the blushing cheek of the maiden ; and his happiness was more fully assured, on the entrance of the Lady Ethelinda, who, joining their hands, gave them her blessing.

“ And now, dearest Emmeline, since I am fully authorised to demand the answer, what was your object, independent of the banter, in seeking the mighty Grandees ?”

“ Innocent curiosity, replied the maiden,” and the birth, parentage, and education of her lover was described, with all his surprising adventures, much to the satisfaction of his mistress, who wept, and then laughed, as her warm interest was variously excited.

A courier arrived in a few days from the Emperor, with the agreeable information,

that in a personal interview with the Bishop of Strasburg, after presenting the documents, the claims of Sir Hugo, to the castle and estates of Altenburg, had been readily admitted; and that the Bishop was prepared to surrender them. The letter concluded with strongly urging Sir Hugo to take immediate possession; marching by way of precaution, at the head of a strong force. Emmeline, though she regretted the necessity, yet consented with sincere devotion to his immediate departure, and, in a day or two, he was, by the kind assistance of his friends, enabled to proceed at the head of a numerous body of retainers. The Bishop, as well as several of the nobility, were immediately struck with the striking resemblance which he bore to his late father; and the castle and its extensive dependencies, were immediately delivered over. Summoning his retainers to his standard, he embodied a considerable force; which, when united with the troops of his friends, he considered

sufficiently strong to garrison the castle. After making such temporary arrangements as were necessary, and entrusting the command to Charles, he hastened back with a small escort, to rejoin his beloved Emmeline, and to embrace his friend Sir Ernest, previous to his departure with the Imperial Family.

The day previous to the Lady Gertrude Ann's bidding an eternal adieu to the towers of Hapsburg, where she had passed so many years of real domestic happiness, she witnessed the union of the Noble Sir Hugo, and the lovely Emmeline. The old castle resounded with merry song, and dance ; all was joy and congratulation on this event. Sir Ernest, though entering into the spirit of the scene, from sincere affection for Emmeline, and his friend Sir Hugo, could not but deeply feel disappointment, in the delay of his own nuptials ; but Matilda had assured him of her ready consent, the moment of his return ; and he lived in hopes of being excused

from his attendance at Aix-la-Chapelle, for the purpose of assisting at the coronation of the Emperor ; particularly as Matilda was not destined to witness that interesting ceremony ; her mother having declined the pressing invitation of the Empress, on the plea of her approaching marriage, and the extreme difficulty she would experience in obtaining an appropriate escort for her return.

Matilda, herself, having lived in the truest affection, with the sister of her heart, felt such an interest in the scene of her joy, that Sir Ernest was almost inclined to express his displeasure at her lively spirits, at the moment when he was prepared to tear himself from her presence ; but when he reflected on the engaging terms of love, in which they had lived with each other, he became ashamed of his irritable, and selfish feelings, particularly as his mistress received his attentions with marked delight ; and the melancholy which had lately clouded her countenance, had all disap-

peared, and was replaced by that sweetness of manner, which had so often captivated his heart, and now succeeded in dispelling the shades of discontent from his brow.

The amiable Empress herself, encouraged the hilarity of the party by her own example, in waving all ceremony; for when her early friend Ethelinda declined taking a seat in her presence, she cordially chided her.

“ My dear Ethelinda, my honours are only recent; their freshness, therefore, has not yet permitted me to steel my heart with coldness, and assume a rigid formality of demeanour, when receiving a most valued friend, on such a joyful occasion, as the marriage of her daughter; and especially one, who having suffered such dreadful misfortunes, is more entitled to attention. It will be full time to environ myself with ceremonies, when the coronation takes place, and my court is regularly formed; yet if my exalted situation is to have the

effect of freezing the kindly affections, and to compel me to exchange all the sweetness and endearments of friendship, for the dull forms of courtly etiquette, I shall indeed regret the tranquil pleasures, with the simple freedom and sincerity of mountain manners ; but, since I cannot persuade as Countess of Hapsburg, I must play the Empress, and command you to be seated.”

Rising, she took the Lady of Greiffen’s hand, and led her to the seat beside her. Her daughters also imitated the ease and grace of their mother, and supported their dignity infinitely better, by mixing in all the cheerful amusements of the evening with their youthful friends, than in seating themselves in solemn state, at the head of the apartment, as if they were beings of a superior order, and afraid of contaminating themselves by coming in contact with their inferiors.

The entertainment was protracted to a late hour, as the party was very numerous ; it being the farewell compliment to the

friends of the illustrious Rodolph. It was a melancholy scene, when the hour of separation at last arrived ; for under every shade of fortune, Gertrude had preserved the esteem of all her acquaintance ; and when she looked probably for the last time, on those, with whom she had lived twenty-five years in habits of strict intimacy, she could not avoid shedding tears : her honours sat heavily on her, and she deeply regretted the necessity of tearing herself from the friends of her youth, and thought that the price she was to pay for her greatness, was much beyond its intrinsic value.

It was decided, that she should proceed on her route to join the Emperor at early dawn, accompanied by Sir Ernest ; and that Ethelinda, with her daughter and son-in-law, should at the same moment quit Hapsburg, for the purpose of again resuming possession of Greiffen, which had been prepared for their reception. The morning rose in deep gloom, as if in unison

with their feelings ; the parting was indeed sorrowful ; and Matilda and Ernest hung in a long and lingering embrace, as if they had presentiments that it was their final adieu. At length, the two parties were seen winding their slow course down the steep hill, and diverging in opposite directions, were soon lost in the deep shade of the forest.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE storm, which had long threatened to destroy her happiness, now burst over the head of the lovely but unfortunate Matilda, who, since the departure of her lover, had seldom ventured beyond the walls of the castle; but being tempted by the beauty of the weather, had now resumed her walks, and frequently visited a rustic chapel, which was situated within a short distance of the outer works; and all being again tranquil in this mountainous region, she often reposed herself in its agreeable shade, when the sun of a clear spring day rendered the air sufficiently warm. The situation was beautiful; the path winding through picturesque rocks, shrubs, and plants, which perfumed the air with their

fragrance; whilst the antique chapel itself, standing on a gentle eminence, composed of rough stone, and unhewn timber, was sheltered from all the fury of the Alpine storms, by a few noble oaks, interspersed with beech and fir; a clear rill trickled from the rock, and invited the languid sufferer to gentle slumber, by its murmuring music.

Matilda had seated herself on the rough steps, in front of the building, after offering up a short prayer, as was her usual practise, to the benificent Disposer of all things, and was deeply meditating on the melancholy prospects of her future life; for various reports were in circulation, regarding the hot displeasure of the Pope, in consequence of Sir Ernest's continued obstinacy, when her attention was suddenly awakened by the approach of a stranger, and she sat in anxious expectation, as the figure occasionally disappeared behind some projecting rock, and then again emerged to view. As the object however approached her, the transient alarm in

some measure subsided, as his habit pronounced him to be a monk; but when on a nearer view, the venerable and pleasing features of the good father Clement became distinctly visible; her confidence and composure returned, and she rose from her rocky seat to welcome him.

“The blessings of a pure and undefiled conscience be with you, daughter,” said he, as he took the offered hand of the maiden, who led him to her seat, saying—

“Rest your wearied limbs, good father, for the ascent from the abbey is long and steep.”

“Daughter,” replied the old man, with an affectionate and sorrowful tone, “there is little rest to be obtained, except in the grave: life is but a shadow; and happiness flies us as a phantom often sought, but seldom obtained.”

“Why, father, this is unlike your usual cheerful disposition; you are more accustomed to view the bright side of objects, and inculcate hope rather than despon-

dency, but perhaps you have at last discovered, that hope is a deceiver."

"It is indeed so," replied Clement, "when fixed on earthly pleasures, but never when it rests, accompanied by faith, on heavenly joys."

Matilda now became alarmed at the increasing solemnity of Clement's manner, and anxiously enquired, if sudden illness had overpowered him? and her thoughts reverting to home, she said—

"My mother, my sister, Sir, has any disaster overtaken them? Why all this fearful preparation?"

"My dear child," after looking earnestly at her, and taking her hand, "if my countenance, or manner betray grief, it arises solely on your account; and it does indeed cause me infinite pain, to be the harbinger of woe, and to dissolve that captivating vision, which at present sheds a delicious sensation over all your feelings; but I have long witnessed your superior mental endowments, the strength and

growing energy of your mind, and therefore proceed to my task, with the more confidence, and the earnest hope, that you will bear the separation (which must inevitably take place) from him, who is indeed worthy, in an earthly point of view, of your purest regard, with that true fortitude, which becomes a follower of Christ.

“That fatal event, which I have in vain exerted all my influence to evade, has fallen like a thunderbolt, on the devoted head of the generous, but too obstinate, Sir Ernest. He has no doubt acted with the best intentions, and from the sober dictates of his judgment, but in striving to maintain his worldly advantages, he has overlooked the duty, which he owes to his spiritual Superior; and in subjecting himself thus rashly to the displeasure of the Church, he will purchase experience at a dear-bought rate. To you, who are so well instructed, in the duties of your religion, it is unnecessary to point out, the absolute impossibility of performing your contract; but

should passion, and the weakness of your heart, overpower your reason, and lead you to risk the vengeance of the Pope, remember your mother's pious notions, will at once forbid his admission within her castle walls. But God, my dear child, will not forsake you in this hour of distress."

The shock was terrible—she sat motionless as a statue, and it was not until the pious father heard the deep-drawn sigh, bursting from her aching heart, and saw the solitary tear, trickling down her pale cheek, that he felt reassured, reason had not deserted its beautiful tenement. Matilda herself was impressed with rigid notions of religion, and of the duty of a child towards its parent, and after the first paroxysm of grief was over, recovering her mental energy, she in broken accents assured the sympathising Monk—"I will place my reliance on the support of Providence, and humbly endeavour to meet the overwhelming calamity, with becoming

fortitude." But as if hope still lingered, she asked—"Is there no means of appeasing the holy Father's wrath?" A smile seemed to relax the rigid muscles of the Monk's countenance, and a warm tear dropped from his aged eye, on her hand, as he eagerly replied—

"Our spiritual Father is ever open to mercy, and ready to receive a repentant sinner, and when Sir Ernest proceeds to Rome, and acknowledges his errors, all his faults will be forgotten, and the anathema withdrawn. And it shall be my pleasing task, to persuade this obstinate youth, that submission alone can restore happiness to the purest heart, that ever beat in maiden's bosom."

The good father tenderly supported, the wretched and trembling girl, down the declivity, and attending her to the castle, took his departure, with a blessing on her head.

Secure in the privacy of her own apartment, Matilda dwelt with bitterness on

her present state, contrasting it with the happier prospects of her earlier years, when enjoying the society of her beloved, she abandoned herself to innocent mirth, and indulged without fear in the delicious intercourse of sisterly affection, for they were then both unconscious of the new feelings, which were daily gaining influence on their virtuous hearts; she recalled the scene of the rustic bridge, when the truth first flashed on their minds: O, what awakened delight she then experienced! what visions of bliss floated over her imagination! for their tastes were congenial, and the noble sentiments by which he regulated his conduct, fully realized her ideas of Knightly dignity. Ah! how engaging did those refined ideas of delicacy, with which he regarded the softer sex, appear. Then she could impart all her light cares and afflictions, and receive consolation in his tenderness; but how altered was the scene! now, when sorrow pressed heavily, and almost weighed her to the

earth, when she truly required consolation, the chosen of her heart was an excommunicated man, and she was forbidden even to meet him. Grief by day, and gloomy visions by night, chased her health, and happiness away: true, she might expect the sympathy of her fond mother, and affectionate sister, but when she reflected on the heavy sorrows of her only surviving parent, she determined, if possible, not to add to her afflictions, by obtruding her own misery on her attention.

That sister too, who had appeared to exist only in her smiles, and who would willingly sacrifice all her joys, to spare her one momentary pang, could she be so selfish, as to nip the flower of her young affection in the bud, and endeavour to withdraw that love and attention, which her noble husband, in the freshness of his recent nuptials, so justly claimed as his right? No, sooner than disturb the alluring charms of connubial happiness, or increase the pangs of suffering widowhood,

she would vigorously check the agonizing feelings of her own heart, and reserving her tears for the privacy of her own solitary apartment, endeavour to wear the appearance of calm resignation, when in the presence of her beloved relatives.

Women are, indeed, capable of the most surprising exertions in the dark hour of peril and misfortune; and frequently exhibit an uncompromising sternness of purpose: indeed, their whole nature seems suddenly changed, and instead of feminine softness, they display more than manly fortitude, in the midst of dangers and difficulties. Chasing therefore her grief to the sanctuary of her own bosom, she struggled against its exhibition, though at the expence of her own health.

CHAPTER XX.

Joy reigned in every heart, and Aix-la-Chapelle could scarcely contain the countless thousands which thronged its streets, to witness the imposing ceremony of the Coronation, to which particular interest was attached, in consequence of the long Interregnum, by which the whole of Germany had been reduced to a state of hapless ruin; but now all their troubles were likely to cease, by the unanimous election of the gallant and enterprising Count of Hapsburg to the Imperial throne. Tried in a hundred battles, endowed with firmness, prudence, and judgment, eminent for his strict sense of justice, and possessed of that happy talent of conciliating even his enemies, by the charm of his disposition,

and insinuating manners; his character not only gave the promise of securing his empire, and subjects from foreign aggression, but of a firm and vigorous administration of the internal affairs of the kingdom; and also held out the flattering prospect, of reconciling those jarring interests, which had deluged the plains of Germany with the blood of its own inhabitants.

It was on the day previous to that, appointed for his inauguration, that Rodolph, at the head of a small, but veteran army, which had been reinforced by all the disposable troops of his own territories, and those of his faithful allies, the Swiss Republics, entered Aix-la-Chapelle in triumph. The windows were filled with all the youth and beauty of the country, and as the cavalcade arrived at the palace assigned for the residence of the Imperial Family, the Emperor was received by Werner, of Eppenstein, Archbishop of Mentz, at the head of the Electors, and of

the constituted Authorities, whilst a troop of maidens of the highest rank, in all their jewelled splendour, presented a crown of gold to the Empress, to be worn at the important ceremony on the following day.

The meeting of Rodolph with Werner, was indeed cordial, and in grateful acknowledgment, for his important services; to the instrumentality of which, he owed his crown, the Emperor freely promised, that the rights and privileges of the Church, should be held inviolable during his reign. In the evening, a Court was held, when Louis the severe, Duke and Elector of Bavaria, was first presented to the gentle Matilda, of Hapsburg, as her future husband.

Acquainted with the circumstances attending the mournful fate, of the beautiful Mary, of Brabant, the Princess betrayed considerable emotion, at the introduction of one, who had been accused of destroying an innocent woman, on bare suspicion,

and who might, in some fit of groundless jealousy, consign her also, to an early grave: and had she been mistress of her own actions, she would have decidedly rejected a suspected murderer, as her lover. But, brought up in habits of passive obedience to the commands of her parents, impressed with the strongest filial affection, and relying on the justice and protection of the Emperor, she soon resumed a tolerable degree of composure, and received his compliments with her usual grace.

Though Louis was naturally of a reserved, and proud character, and spoke with harshness and severity, to those with whom he transacted business; (for he interested himself deeply, in the minutest details of state affairs, and was very conversant, in the institutions and laws of his territories;) yet his manners and disposition became considerably softened, after his marriage, when in the company of the Electress, who, though not a regular

beauty, possessed an agreeable person, with expressive eyes, and was blessed with such winning sweetness of disposition, and fascinating powers of conversation, as to attract, and retain the regard of all those who approached her; even Louis himself, owed the reputation of many a noble and generous deed, to her prudent suggestions, and advice.

The Electors of Saxony, and Brandenburg, were also presented to Agnes, and Hedwige, and their nuptials were appointed for celebration, immediately after the coronation of their father.

On the following day, the ancient Church of Nôtre-Dame, was crowded with the principal nobility, and gentry of the empire, and the noble Rodolph, decorated with a magnificence becoming the memorable occasion, (although he was in general distinguished for the simplicity of his attire) ascended the steps strewed with flowers, and took his seat on an elevated throne.*

* Historical.

But here a dilemma arose, for the crown of Charlemagne was missing at the important moment, and many murmurs from the nobility disaffected to his cause, and staunch supporters of Ottocarus, of Bohemia, were heard through the hall; dismay and confusion, seemed to threaten a serious interruption, to the harmony, and unanimity, which ought to prevail, during so important an event as the inauguration. But Rodolph, on whom all eyes were turned, had shewn, by an uninterrupted course of glorious actions, that he was worthy to become a Sovereign, and now strengthened that claim, by his happy presence of mind, for seizing his sword, he exclaimed—

“This is my sceptre, in virtue of which I will support my title.” And then turning to the Archbishop of Mentz, and pointing to his crucifix—“Under the protection of this, I will conquer, and confound all my enemies.”

This spirited address created a general sensation in his favour, and renewed the

acclamations; and the traitors, who had begun to talk of refusing to take the oath of allegiance, and even proposed to dissolve the present assembly, and proceed to another election, were reduced at once to fear and silence; thinking it useless to contend against a man so dauntless, and capable of acting, with coolness and vigour under all emergencies.

A general buzz of admiration ran through the Cathedral, and the words “the crown! the crown!” were echoed along the lofty aisles, and a noble appearing with the mislaid insignia of royalty, presented it to the Archbishop, who placing it on the head of Rodolph, addressed him—

“We, the Electors of the Empire, anoint you King of the Romans, and in virtue of our office, in the name of our Heavenly Father, solemnly enjoin you, to regulate your conduct, agreeably to the laws of God and man; avoiding injustice, seek only to protect the rights of all classes, and to do good. So shalt thou retain this

perishable crown, until you obtain one more lasting, which shall never fade away."

The Emperor replied—"I swear to obey the laws human, and divine."

Immediately the air was rent with shouts of "Long live the noble Rodolph, King of the Romans."

At the superb banquet which ensued, the several Electors performed the duties allotted to them—all the minute observances of etiquette being strictly followed, in order to maintain the privileges of their various offices. On the following day, the three eldest daughters of the Emperor were united in marriage to the Duke of Bavaria, and the Electors of Saxony, and Brandenburg, Rodolph obtaining a strong support to his interest, in consequence of these happy unions.

After the ceremony, a tournament was held, when Müller, a citizen of Zurich, throwing down his gauntlet, challenged the Margrave of Bâden, who had been

loudest in his treasonable observations, when the crown was missing, and had actually proposed, that the election should be declared illegal. The Margrave, however, treated the demand with contempt, saying that his antagonist not possessing Knightly dignity, he could not be permitted to enter the lists against him; and concluded by proudly observing—

“ However honourable this man may be considered, amongst his brother mechanics at Zurich, he can only be recognized as a serf, by the nobility assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle.”

The enraged Burgher storming at the insolent pride of the noble, rushed to the Imperial presence, and complained of his grievances. Rodolph immediately recognizing his gallant preserver, by whose aid he had been rescued from death, and remounted on another horse, at the battle in front of Zurich, commanded him to kneel in his presence, and taking the sword of Sir Ernest, gave him the accolade, saying

—“ Rise, Sir Michael of Zurich; and I doubt not your trusty sword will prove you well worthy of your new order.” Taking the golden spur from his own, he fixed it on the heel of the brave Switzer, who having become one of the privileged order, instantly sought out the Marshal of the lists, and renewed his challenge, which the haughty Prince was now, by the laws of chivalry, compelled to accept.

The combatants were soon armed for the fight, the one firm in the consciousness of his right, whether as Burgher or Knight; the other proud of his rank, and considering the order dishonoured by the introduction of a peasant, fully determined to make an example of the insolent serf. The trumpets sounded, the barriers were thrown open, when the champions, impatient of delay, rushed to the fierce encounter. The sturdy Sir Michael, skilled in the dexterous use of his weapon, in consequence of the numerous combats in which he had been engaged, in defence of

the liberty of his native town, aimed his spear against the helmet of his adversary, whose horse swerving at the moment of the contact, saved his master from an inevitable overthrow, whilst Sir Michael also escaped with a slight blow. Wheeling their horses again, they prepared for a fresh career, and the Margrave perceiving, from the perilous attempt of the Burgher, in aiming at his helmet, that he was confident in his own dexterity, felt that it was necessary to exert his utmost experience, in order to preserve his well-earned reputation. The shock was terrible, and both were unhorsed by its violence, their spears being shivered to their hands, the point of Sir Michael's having pierced through the joints of the well tempered armour, and wounded the Margrave in the shoulder, whilst that of his antagonist, made a slight scratch in his side. Having experienced no great inconvenience, beyond the bruises occasioned by their fall, and the weight of their armour, the Knights returned to the attack

with renewed fury: blow followed blow, the blood streamed from their wounds, as they no longer contended for the prize awarded by the hand of beauty, to the fortunate victor, but for life itself. Success seemed doubtful, all eyes were earnestly fixed on them, each spectator being variously interested in the struggle; those who were enamoured of the pride of birth, and distinguished rank, and looked down with hatred and contempt, on the presumptuous bearing of a peasant, prayed for the success of the Margrave, and filled the air with deafening shouts of applause, whenever he gained the slightest advantage, and shuddered when Sir Michael made a well-directed blow. Many a high-born chief, particularly the noble Rodolph, admiring valour whether under a courtly or a rustic garb, was loud in his praises of the desperate exertions of the gallant Burgher, who at length became weakened by the loss of blood, whilst the Margrave pressed on him with redoubled ardour, and was in

the act of aiming a deadly blow at him, when his foot unluckily slipped in some gore, and Michael observing his advantage, made one last strenuous effort, and struck him to the ground with his heavy battle-axe.

Sir Ernest, who acted as Marshal of the lists, seeing the imminent danger of the unhappy Margrave, put an end to the combat, before the blow could be repeated, and leading the almost exhausted victor to the front of the principal gallery, presented him to the Electress of Bavaria, who presided as Queen of the Sports. Taking the prize, which consisted of a sword and embroidered scarf, she presented it to Sir Michael, accompanying the graceful action with a few kind words, expressive of the heartfelt pleasure she experienced, in being selected to reward a gallant Knight, to whom her father owed so much, and she firmly trusted, that as he had formerly displayed so much energy, in defending the Count of Hapsburg's life, he would now

use his sword, with equal success, in defending the Emperor's just rights. The Victor bowed his head, and swore—" Though simple in birth and manners, he would at least equal the high-born Knights, in the faithful performance of his duties."

Numerous were the onsets, and various the fortunes of this joyous day; many in all the pride of youthful valour, burnt to display their courage and address, under the approving eye of their lady-love, and to bear away the prize from their disappointed competitors. To some, Fortune distributed her favours, with liberal hand, and gratified their aspiring wishes, whilst the sweet smiles that illumined the countenances of their mistresses, and the admiring glances from their eyes, repaid them amply, for all the toils and dangers of the day.

But some there were, whose nativities had not been cast under a lucky horoscope, and whom disastrous fate, now compelled to mourn their dishonoured overthrow, in

all the bitterness of disappointed hope, with shattered armour, and downcast looks, and seeking to avoid the angry glances of their indignant lady-loves, as they retired slowly to their quarters, there to await the summons of the haughty victors, for the ransom of their horses and armour.

The lists were again cleared, the trumpets sounded the charge, as the barriers were thrown open, for the last encounter, which was to terminate the joust. Count Albert, eldest son of Rodolph, who had only joined him a few days before, from Suabia, and Adolphus, of Nassau, prepared to contend for the richest prize of the day, little imagining at the moment, that their next onset would be for empire and life. In this instance, however, Fortune proved treacherous to the house of Hapsburg, and the unhappy Albert was obliged to submit to his fortunate victor; for, at the very first encounter, he was completely overthrown, by the superior strength and power of a Flanders horse, which Adolphus rode,

and before he could recover himself from the effects of his heavy fall, his antagonist, leaping from his charger, prevented him from rising, and was proclaimed the conqueror, by the Marshal and his Heralds; on which Nassau, gracefully bowing, received his reward from the hands of the fair sister of his competitor.

The contests being all decided, the Imperial family, surrounded by a numerous retinue of all the gallantry and beauty of the land, returned to their palace, to the sound of martial music, and the enthusiastic plaudits of the people. Rodolph, ever anxious to perform benevolent actions, and grateful for acts of benefit received, dispatched Sir Ernest to enquire after Sir Michael's health, and the state of his wounds, and also to propose his immediate removal to the Palace. Perhaps there might have been some shade of interested motive in this conduct, since the Burgher, independent of his eminent qualities as a warrior, was possessed of great influence

in his Canton, and Rodolph had already obtained full experience of the value of his alliance with the hardy Swiss, who were not only admirable soldiers, but faithful to the letter and spirit of their treaties, and in this instance, when in expectation of a desperate conflict for his crown, with the most powerful sovereign in Europe, he was more particularly anxious to secure, the favour and support of the brave mountaineers, through the influence of their countryman.

Sir Ernest, having with some difficulty discovered, the object of his search, in a miserable shed, (for the town was so crowded, that thousands were obliged to encamp in the open fields, with only slight protection from the weather;) the first consideration was to remove him, to the apartment prepared for him in the palace, but to this Sir Michael strenuously objected, as he was too much accustomed to the difficulties and privations of mountain warfare, to mind a few inconveniencies, and it

was not until Sir Ernest suggested, that it would be more convenient to the Emperor's surgeon to attend him at the palace, and also that he would rest more securely there, as the Margrave was a man of vindictive character, and perhaps might be induced to adopt, some unjustifiable means of revenging himself for his recent disgrace, and dwelt particularly on the circumstance, that the death of so influential a man, would be of the greatest detriment to the Emperor's interest at the present moment, that his arguments at length prevailed, and the worthy Sir Michael having consented, was transported to his new quarters, where his wounds being examined, they were happily found not to be dangerous.

Shortly after, one of the Margrave's Squires arriving, with a large sum of money, for the ransom of his lord's armour, which from its splendour was of great value; Sir Michael, with a princely spirit of liberality, immediately said—

“ The Margrave fought with a courage

worthy a better cause, and as accident, rather than my own skill, procured me the victory, I return him his armour without ransom, for though I consider myself his equal in arms, I cannot be considered as his conqueror."

"Sir Knight," replied the Squire, "I cannot but admire your generosity, but do not feel authorized to accept your noble offer, without the express permission of my lord." Returning again in a short time, he addressed Sir Michael—

"Noble Knight, I am commanded by the Margrave, to express his surprise at a proposal more becoming a prince than a peasant, and to declare his extreme regret, that under the circumstances of the case, he cannot accept your splendid offer."

"Sir Squire, your lord has yet to learn, that true nobility consists not in birth, but in virtuous actions, and disinterested conduct."

The terms were easily adjusted, and the money paid. The Squire, on receiving a

handsome present, declared that Sir Michael not only fought, but acted and paid like a prince; and on parting, whispered in his ear to "be cautious." But whatever might have been the intentions of his enraged adversary, he had no opportunity of carrying his plans into execution, for Sir Michael's vigorous constitution soon enabled him to recover from his temporary weakness, arising from the loss of blood, and he was dispatched, in company with Sir Ernest, to form a new treaty with the Swiss, for the maintenance of a considerable body of troops: the Emperor having received undoubted information, of the positive determination of the Bohemian King, to dispute the validity of the Election; and that he had already secured several of the minor German Princes in his alliance.

During the ball in the evening, Werner, Archbishop of Mentz, having drawn the Emperor aside, generously informed him, that having, in remembrance of his for-

mer hospitality, and his services in escorting him over the Alps, exerted himself to procure his election as King of the Romans, he yet did not think that sufficient, but considering the vast expences to which Rodolph, in the first instance, must necessarily be subjected, both to support his dignity, and defend his claims, he had, in conjunction, and with the approbation of the Electors of Treves and Cologne, raised a large supply of money, which should be paid into his coffers on the following morning.

Struck with this noble conduct, Rodolph embraced the Archbishop, declaring that men were considered honourable in simply fulfilling their promises, but that he had more than doubly performed his; not only lavishing his good offices, but his treasures also; and had imposed such a vast load of gratitude on him, that he should indeed find it difficult to repay.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR Ernest had been charged with several important political commissions, and being detained considerably beyond the time he had at first expected, requested Sir Michael to proceed direct to Switzerland, to carry the Emperor's ulterior wishes into execution; and, at the same time, entrusted him with a letter to his lady-love.

It was shortly after the good father had communicated the fatal tidings of the Pope's displeasure, as Matilda was seated with her mother and sister in their favorite arbour, which commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, that the arrival of a stranger Knight was announced, who demanded an interview with the Lady Matilda, for whom he had been entrusted

with an epistle, which he had solemnly promised to deliver into her own hands. The colour immediately rose to her cheek, for her heart whispered from whom the letter came, as rising she accompanied her mother to the gallery, where the stranger awaited them. His face was unknown; but on declaring his name, Ethelinda received him with great courtesy, remembering the eminent service which he had performed for Sir Rodolph. Sir Hugo, who had just entered, greeted the stalwart Knight, and accompanied him to the hall, where refreshments were served.

Matilda, having received the letter from the hands of Sir Michael, retired to her own apartment, to peruse it. Here, removed from all observing eyes, the innocent girl long held it in her trembling hand, before she could summon sufficient resolution to open it. Had it arrived before the announcement of the terrible anathema, how eagerly would she have cut the twisted silk which secured it, and devoured

its contents! but now that cruel fate had deprived her mind of hope, and filled it with the most gloomy presentiments, she feared to peruse those fond expressions, which would probably speak of joys, alas! never to be realized. Ashamed, at last, of her weakness, she slowly unfolded the leaves, and read—

“ To my soul’s delight, the beauteous Matilda.

“ I had expected in conducting the Empress and her daughter to Bâsle, to have instantly returned, to claim that promise, in the performance of which, my happiness is to commence; but how can words express my disappointment, when the Emperor demanded my presence at his coronation! The days which I have passed separated from you, and deprived of your intellectual society, have appeared as years to me; the events, the fêtes, the spectacles, which I have been compelled to attend, have seemed flat and insipid; even the coronation itself, graced with the presence of

all the youth, beauty, and chivalry of the land, had no attractions for me. I passed through the crowded apartments like a wandering spirit, transported to a world of my own ; for my whole soul was entranced with a sense of your perfections, and though absent in body, I was ever present with you in imagination, and saw nought but your heavenly image.

“ I became insensible to the attentions, to the kind regards of the Imperial Family ; and if I have regarded the manners and customs, the antiquities, in fact, all those objects which usually attract notice, in the various cities, through which I have passed, since my cruel separation from you, it has only been with the pleasing hope of relating the various particulars, for the amusement of your cultivated mind.

“ I had flattered myself, that fate had expended its wrath ; that a few more days of vegetation, and I should again revive in your dear presence ; that all my cares would be chased away by the light of your

smiles, but here I am again detained. When, however, these odious state affairs are concluded, I shall fly on the wings of love, to assure you personally, of my unbounded affection, and to claim that hand, which I prize above all the treasures of the world.

“Your own faithful and attached Knight,
ERNEST, von Grunengen.”

Frankfort.

“Cruel! cruel fate! Alas! he little suspects the dreadful curse, which awaits his arrival; had he but listened to my remonstrances, and consented to abandon a useless prerogative, to the craving importunities of the Church, (as he wrongly terms it,) instead of flying from his presence, as some noxious reptile, I should now have been anxiously counting the lazy minutes, until his arrival. I trust, however, that Father Clement will perform his promise, and make him acquainted with this horrible sentence of excommunication, and save him the pain and disgrace of a public rejection from our castle; for if I know

aught of his generous and feeling disposition, such a measure would assuredly break his heart. Alas! I fear this fatal blow has already done so with mine. I feel that misery has performed its worst; that I am not long for this world: there is a chill at my heart; the life-blood seems to stagnate around it; hateful visions hover round my couch. I often see my grave preparing; it looks so cold, dark, damp, and comfortless.—Death is a fearful thing! To part from all we hold most dear on earth, and to go to unknown regions—Where?—but I hear the light step of my affectionate sister; it will grieve her gentle spirit to see me gradually sinking into a settled melancholy. I must still exert myself for the few days I may yet have to remain on earth. The struggle has, indeed, been too desperate, and has surpassed my strength; but I shall depart with the pleasing consolation, of having saved them weeks of pain.”

The door opened; and as Emmeline

hastened towards her, Matilda observed that her eyes were suffused with tears; in the next instant she was locked in her sister's embrace; who at once concluded, that some new tale of misery was to be disclosed. Words failed them both; and the silence was only disturbed by the hysteric sobs of Emmeline. The suspense at length became too intensely painful; and Matilda summoning all her resolution, tenderly enquired the cause of this violent emotion. Emmeline raised her head from her sister's shoulder, and wiping the tears from her eyes, related in broken accents, the particulars of the interview between Father Clement and her mother, regarding the sentence, which had been issued by the Pope against Sir Ernest. "The shock was indeed appalling, being so unprepared for such an event; and the truth at once flashed on our minds, of the true cause of the late melancholy change in your looks and manners. Alas! my sweet sister! have you judged so lightly of our affection.

towards you? - Could you place no confidence in the sincerity of our love? Does not your conscience whisper you, that this conduct, though arising from the generous desire to spare your relatives pain, is ill judged? Is it not one of the sweetest privileges of friendship and love, to soothe the sorrows of the afflicted? Does not grief, when shared with another, lose half its power? Yet, concealing this painful secret within your breast, you have allowed it to prey on your health, and permitted us to indulge in our mis-placed gaiety; concluding that the fixed and melancholy serenity of your countenance, merely arose from the prolonged absence of Sir Ernest."

"You blame me unjustly," Matilda replied, "in wishing me to neglect one of the brightest proofs of affection and love; (the sacrifice of our own feelings, when it can contribute to the comfort and happiness of those whom we honour and esteem;) and you, my dearest Emmeline, would be the first to follow my example."

“ I will not add to your heavy burthens, by harshness and complaint, for I have yet to relate the consequence of the Monk’s communication, and it will require all your fortitude to bear it ; but you must first promise me to renew your confidence in her, whom you have so often called the sister of your affection ;” and the fond girl tenderly pressing her hand, and looking wistfully in her face, continued—

“ Will you deny me this consolation ? for how can I experience happiness, whilst your heart is sinking under this load of sorrow ? Oh ! this assent is merciful ; you are, indeed, my own Matilda again—you are too well acquainted with my mother’s rigid principles, regarding the authority of the Church, for me to dwell on the emotion she experienced in learning the condition, to which her future son-in-law was reduced, in consequence of this event ; but it made me shudder, to hear the good Father himself declare, that by holding communication with him, whom from our

earliest infancy, we have considered and treated as a brother, we should all be contaminated ; yet my mother gravely assented to it, and said, that the wretched Sir Ernest should no longer be permitted to enter the castle, whilst lying under this terrible curse."

" Do not grieve, my Emmeline, for I have been fully prepared for this result, painful though it be."

" Can this be religion, my dearest Matilda ? Has Ernest then committed any crime ? I thought men were only considered wicked, when they performed evil actions ; and, even then, instead of being deprived, they should rather be invited to share the consolations of religion. But it rejoices my heart, to see you bear this overwhelming disappointment with such pious resignation ; yet it ought not to surprise me, for your mental strength has ever excited my admiration. I trust your destiny is only obscured for the moment, and

that happiness dispelling the mist, will again renovate our hearts with joy."

"Living, as I have done," replied Matilda, "in all the easy familiarity of childhood; assimilated too, as are our dispositions and tastes, this cruel separation from the dear object of my choice, must naturally bend me to the earth; but you will not estimate my fortitude at so high a rate, when I acquaint you, that I live in the confident hope, that the Confessor's influence over the mind of his pupil, will succeed in persuading him to an immediate submission; and thus relieve him from the painful effects of his obstinacy and wickedness. Still, I fear me, death will have claimed his victim, before that happy day arrives."

"Oh! say not so, my own dearest sister; long years of joy and connubial love are in store for you. You will yet live to gladden all our hearts, and dear Ernest will rejoice in making any sacrifice, to gain admission to your sweet society; but I trust that you

do not coincide with Clement, in considering the unfortunate Baron as wicked; for my own Hugo says, that the Pope himself is more deserving of that character, for his rapacity in wishing to arrest for the advantage of the Church, the undoubted right of another; and, that he will not hesitate, to meet Sir Ernest, the moment of his arrival; and will contrive, if you should wish it also, to procure you an interview with him."

Matilda's countenance expressed great repugnance, to these observations of her sister; and she exclaimed,—“ Much as I love the unhappy man, (for miserable indeed must he be, who intentionally offends the holy head of our Church,) yet I would sooner forfeit all my earthly advantages, than run the risk of losing my future hopes, by voluntarily meeting a defiled person. It will, therefore, be for our mutual comfort, if we never meet, until he is again absolved from sin."

“ Alas! my sister! if such is your de-

termination, I indeed fear, the sacrifice will prove too much for your weak frame; but, whether in misery or happiness, I can never cease to pray for the speedy recovery of one, around whose heart, my dearest affections are entwined; and may a beneficent Father realize the dearest wish of my soul, in pouring balm into your wounded spirit;" and the tender hearted girl wept in all the bitterness of true anguish. We must now return to the fair *Blanche*.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIR Arnould, son of the powerful Count of Tockenburgh, had been early introduced at the Castle of Ustar, where his many agreeable qualities, and lively disposition, had rendered him a general favourite, particularly with the lovely Blanche. Sir Frederic and his lady ever gave him a friendly reception, on his occasional visits, which were more frequently repeated, as their daughter, improving in beauty, approached the marriageable age.

The opening charms of the rich heiress having engaged the notice of the young Count, and evincing a marked partiality for her society, their acquaintance produced intimacy and friendship, which soon ripened into love. On Arnould declaring

his passion, a ready consent was granted by the noble father of the bride ; and the old Count was equally willing to give his sanction, since the union of his son with the daughter of Ustar, would render him one of the most powerful Nobles in that part of the country.

The happy Arnauld was now admitted to all the privileges of a lover ; the Lady Emily, however, decided, that their nuptials should be postponed for twelve months in consequence of the extreme youth of her daughter. At length, the preliminaries were all amicably arranged, and preparations were made for the celebration of the marriage, on a scale of magnificence, corresponding with the rank and possessions of the respective parties.

But all these golden visions of matrimonial happiness were unexpectedly dispersed, and the youthful pair were compelled to lament their separation, in unavailing grief. A week before the day appointed for the joyful ceremony, Sir Fre-

deric received the distressing news of the assault on the Castle of Greiffen, and the unfortunate death of Sir Herman; on communicating the sad intelligence to his intended son-in-law, the whole frame of Sir Arnould betrayed evident signs of agitation, entirely beyond what the occasion warranted, even in a man of the acutest feelings. This perturbation did not escape the penetrating eye of Sir Frederic, but he attributed it at the time to the fear, which the youth might possibly entertain, that such a melancholy event, as the sudden and violent death of an highly esteemed friend, might interrupt the accomplishment of his fond hopes; a feeling, which the Baron could well excuse, as he had himself felt the power of the exciting passion of love; but he was rather surprized, when instead of waiting the few remaining days, to recover from the effects of this painful news, Sir Arnould pressed an immediate marriage with the object of his love. In vain, her father pointed out the great indecency of such a

proceeding, whilst the fate of her two most intimate friends, the daughters of Sir Herman, was still a mystery; the youth only urged his request the more vehemently, declaring that he would supply the place of her friends, and be every thing to her. The Baron, however, was inexorable; considering that it would be insulting to the memory of his friend, and derogatory to the delicacy of Blanche.

The cause of the youth's importunity was discovered on the following day; for it appeared, that the old Count of Tockenburg had entered into an alliance with the Count of Regensburg, against the republic of Zurich; and that Count Rinaldo, the perpetrator of the atrocious murder of Sir Herman, was a party to the league. Incensed at this proceeding, Sir Frederic immediately demanded of the unfortunate Sir Arnould, if the fact was correct? The youth, entertaining a high sense of honor, though he feared that it would for the present, annihilate all his

dreams of joy, answered in the affirmative ; when the Baron addressing him with the greatest solemnity, declared, however much he regretted the circumstance, that it would be impossible for him to permit his daughter to contract an alliance with the son of a Noble, who could countenance so atrocious a deed, as murder, by entering into an alliance with the instigator and perpetrator of it ; and, that from this moment, he must consider all their engagements at an end. Yet, Sir Frederic kindly pitying his cruel disappointment, which arose, not from any culpable deed of his own, but from the conduct of his father, permitted him to pass the evening with his family. In vain, Sir Arnould pleaded their long intimacy, the danger of injuring Blanche's health and feelings, by this abrupt termination of her fondest hopes ; in vain, he promised to remain neuter in the approaching contest. Sir Frederic was inexorable ; confessing at the same time, the pain, he himself experienced, in thus

doing violence to his own sentiments ; for he candidly declared, that from his intimate knowledge of his character and disposition, there was not a nobleman, in the whole circuit of his acquaintance, whom he considered so well calculated to insure the happiness of his only child ; but in alliances of such tender nature, where esteem and mutual confidence did not exist between the parents of the contracting parties, there could be no happiness for the children. It was, therefore, for their benefit, that they should at once part ; and since they were both so young, no doubt, they would find objects, likely to ensure their lasting felicity, when time should heal their bleeding wounds, and wear away the traces of their present passion.

The wretched Blanche threw herself in despair at her mother's feet, and passionately entreated her interference ; but whilst Emily gently raising her from the ground, and folding her in a tender embrace, tried to moderate the grief of her afflicted child,

by the endearing caresses of maternal affection, she assured her, that Sir Frederic's determination was final; that she must bid an eternal adieu to Sir Arnould. With an aching heart, she dried her tears, and accompanied her mother to the saloon, where the exhortations of her lover, whatever their nature might have been, seemed to produce a wonderful effect, in tranquilizing her mind, and enabling her to bear the pain of the parting scene, with tolerable composure, to the evident delight of her attached parents, who complimented her on such dutiful behaviour, and on evincing such virtuous resignation to their wishes.

Disappointed in uniting his daughter to a husband so worthy of her, the Lord of Ustar, on his return from his mission to the Pope, determined on accepting an invitation from his sister, who resided at the Castle of Helsberg, in the principality of Saltzburg, as he imagined that change of air and scene, would have a beneficial

effect on the health and spirits of Blanche ; entertaining also, the latent hope, that she might be induced, by the superior accomplishments of some other Knight, to embark her affections in the stormy excitement of a second love. An unexpected order, however, from the Emperor, obliged him to defer his project to a more favourable occasion, and he was obliged to depart from Ustar, as the urgency of the affair admitted of no delay. He did so, however, with the less reluctance, as he placed implicit confidence in the affection and discretion of his wife, in softening the affliction of his child, and in the prudence and energy of his faithful Chatelain, in guarding her from any attempts of Sir Arnould, to secure her person. Fortunately, nothing happened to disturb their tranquillity, and the political affair being arranged sooner than expected, the Baron was enabled to carry his projected tour into immediate execution.

They had not long been arrived at the

Castle of Helsberg, ere the Count of Gratzburg appeared attracted by the charms of Blanche, and exerted all his powers to engage her favourable attention; but though she received him politely, and evidently saw his intentions, yet she afforded him no hopes of creating an impression on her heart. The Count was cautious in his proceedings, (having had considerable experience in these affairs,) and clearly perceiving that his progress was slow, that the warmer his advances became, the colder was her reception, he determined to make no open declaration, in order to avoid a positive rejection, and to trust to time, and the influence of her parents, for his success.

Blanche was hurried into scenes of gaiety, to divert her mind from former recollections; hunting the boar, and various other field sports, were resorted to; boating parties were made on the lakes; tournaments were held, in which the

Count, who excelled in these manly exercises, frequently received the prize from the fair hand of his Lady-love, who acted as Queen of the Pageant, but all proved useless; a placid air of composure prevailed, instead of her former bright smiles, and she mixed in the scenes of festivity with careless indifference. Her lover despairing of obtaining her regard, applied to her father, to exert his influence, and Sir Frederic immediately commanding her to receive the Count of Gratzburg as her future husband, Blanche calmly replied—

“ My hand, dear father, is at your disposal, although my heart is in the possession of another; and since you command, I will endeavour to comply with your wishes, even at the sacrifice of my own peace of mind, trusting that you will not hurry my nuptials, but allow me full time for consideration.”

She also embraced an early opportunity of communicating her sentiments to Sir Maximilian, candidly acquainting him

with the state of her feelings, and that in receiving her hand, he must not expect her heart.

The Count gallantly replied—"In pledging your faith, your love will doubtless soon follow; at least, the most assiduous, and devoted attention, on my part, shall not be wanting, to obtain that enchanting object; and I am ready to accept you on these conditions."

The gentle Blanche was sensible, that all attempts to avoid her fate, were now perfectly vain, and as she appeared to conquer the evident repugnance, she had at first exhibited towards her suitor, her father felt perfectly satisfied with the prudence of his conduct, in thus exerting his parental authority, and remarked to his Emily, that the persevering and manly attentions of the Count, would at length efface the image of Arnould from her heart. The fair Emily made no reply to this, as she had experienced the truth of the observation, in her own person.

Day followed day, and the spirits of Blanche continued to improve so much, that her father considered there would be no longer any danger in returning to Ustar, the scene of her first love; therefore bidding adieu to the splendid hospitalities of Helsberg, he returned with his family, accompanied by the Count of Gratzburg. After allowing a reasonable time for maidenly scruples to wear away, the ardent lover pressed his suit, and received a reluctant consent; the usual preparations were forthwith commenced, the neighbouring nobility, and the principal magistrates of the new republics, were all invited; the vast Baronial hall was lined with triple ranges of tables, whilst deer and wild hogs were roasted whole, to feast the numerous retainers of the wealthy Baron. Casks of generous wine for the rich, and noble guests, and of beer, for those of humbler rank, were already broached; visitors were arriving from all quarters, whilst light laughter in the courts

below, with sounds of harp, and song, in the halls above, animated the spirits of the crowds, assembled to do honor to the youthful pair.

Never had Blanche looked so beautiful, in the eyes of her noble lover, never had her smiles so filled his heart with rapture, as when retiring for the night, he imprinted a burning kiss on her cold cheek, and whispered the breathings of his fond desire, to her unwilling ear. The morning rose with splendour, all nature looked gay, in her brilliant Spring attire, the wild flowers scented the air with their rich perfume, the birds carolled gaily, the pulse of the expectant bridegroom beat high, with the fond hopes of anticipated bliss; all eyes were turned towards the chamber of the lovely bride, in expectation of seeing her issue in the blaze of her youthful charms, forgetting in their impatience, that it yet wanted two good hours by the dial, to the time appointed for the ceremony. The loitering guests, apprized at length of their

mistake, were preparing to seek other amusements, to fill up the vacant time, when a piercing shriek, from the chamber of the bride, announced the sudden tidings of woe; a tumult of voices, and confusion of sounds arose, when the door being thrown open with violence, the frantic mother rushed out of the apartment, exclaiming in all the agony of grief—"My daughter! my daughter!"

Various were the conjectures formed: some, imagined she was dead; others, that she repented of her vows; every individual delivered some fanciful opinion, and the whole castle became a scene of confusion. The wretched and disappointed bridegroom rushed from room to room, calling in the most heart-breaking accents, for his adored Blanche, but all in vain. When the commotion had somewhat subsided, it was ascertained, that on entering her daughter's chamber to arouse her, thinking she slept too late, on this important morning, Lady Emily was shocked to find,

that the bed had not been occupied, and that no signs of her child were to be discovered. Her attendant, who slept in an antechamber, being summoned, she stated, that on retiring for the night, her lady had dismissed her, declaring she would employ herself in reading, and seek to fortify her mind, with lessons of holy writ, since she indeed wanted support, and that it would require great resolution, to give her hand, where her heart was not interested. But her parent's wishes were laws to her, and that she would endeavour to prepare herself, to obey their commands, with cheerfulness and resignation, however severe they might be. "I thought my own heart would have burst," continued the Abigail, "she looked so sorrowful, and trembled so."

"Did you not hear any noise in the room, after the door was closed?"—enquired Emily.

"For some time, I imagined that she was repeating prayers, but presently all

was silent, and having undergone great fatigue, from the exertions and preparations of the day, I soon dropt into a sound sleep. On waking in the morning, I did not venture into her apartment, as my Lady had desired me not to disturb her."

"Did you remember to bolt the outer door, Louisa, before retiring to your couch?"

"Yes, my Lady, I invariably do that, particularly since we heard the mournful music at night. There are strange noises in that dismal corridor, I should not like to trust myself there, after twelve o'clock."

"For shame, Louisa, are you frightened with the whistling of the wind along the passage?"

"No, my Lady," proudly answered the domestic, "but I confess it makes one's blood run cold, to hear such solemn music, and unearthly sounds at midnight hours. It was but the night before last, that Bertram, being rather later than usual, saw a gigantic figure, all clothed in white, flying

like the wind through the castle gardens.”

“ My heart is too oppressed to listen to these tales, Louisa—Have you no information regarding your mistress ? ”

“ None, my Lady, only I trust you will not compel me to sleep again in this fearful apartment, to be carried away by some terrible goblin.”

Affecting to treat the fears of the faithful domestic with ridicule, Lady Emily nevertheless could not suppress the painful ideas, which arose to her imagination, on this distressing subject, for evidently no person could have passed through the outer door, as it was firmly bolted within, and there could have been no collusion on the part of Louisa, as the door of her lady's apartment was likewise fastened within. The windows were too high from the ground, to admit of the possibility of her escaping by that means. All the panels had been closely examined, without any discovery ; besides, Sir Frederic would naturally have been acquainted with a secret passage, had any such ex-

isted. Every corner of the castle was searched, and the numerous retainers of Sir Frederic, and his guests, on being questioned, could throw no light on this singular disappearance.

Emissaries were dispatched in every direction, to scour the roads and woods; indeed every measure, which prudence could dictate, was adopted without success. When all expectations of discovering the mystery proved abortive, and hope grew sick, the numerous guests, out of respect to the feelings of the family, and pitying their unexpected calamity, took a mournful leave, quitting the scene of their promised festivities, with infinite regret.

The noble bridegroom, bereft of all his hopes, though in reality grieving more for the loss of the rich inheritance, than for the person of the beautiful bride, proposed to the Baron, to traverse the whole country at the head of his retainers, for he was anxious to quit the house of mourning, and therefore joyfully embraced this op-

portunity of escape. The Lord of Gratzburg was a man of the world, naturally cold, and selfish in his feelings, and though he succeeded in impressing the guests, with the idea of his truly disinterested passion for the charms of the lovely Blanche, thinking it necessary, out of regard to decency, to affect the deepest sorrow, yet he was unfit to appreciate the true value of her amiable disposition, and accomplished mind; so that the knowledge, that her heart was in the possession of another, proved no obstacle to his feigned attachment, for gold was, in this instance, the real idol he worshipped, and he calculated that her broad lands would amply fill his coffers. Therefore, although he really made unremitting exertions, to discover the place of her retreat, and even underwent great hardships in the pursuit, the impulse was not created by the pure love of her person, but by the base lust for the acquisition of her riches.

The Count at length returned from his unsuccessful enquiry, and after condoling with the afflicted parents of Blanche, shortly after departed to his own castle, and sought some new object to replenish his diminished treasury. An opportunity soon offered, for his high descent, extensive domains, and connexions, rendered his alliance a point of great consequence; besides, to do him justice, his personal character was good, and though his feelings were cold, yet he was free from furious passions, or vices, and in general was liberal to his retainers; but the long contests in which, like the greater part of the nobles of that period, he had been engaged in, had thrown him into great embarrassments, and suggested the idea of repairing his broken fortunes, by a lucrative marriage. This desirable point was now happily realized, on his being united to the niece of the Prince Bishop of Saltzburg, whose dowry was considered, even greater than

that of the Lady Blanche. In the enjoyment of her rich possessions, he soon forgot his former disappointment, and the sudden and mysterious loss of his late intended bride.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE unaccountable disappearance of their beloved daughter on the eve of her marriage, became a perpetual source of misery to the unhappy parents, and their affliction was considerably encreased by the uncertainty of her fate. Superior to the weak superstitions of the age, they yet experienced a secret shudder, when the mysterious circumstances attending the event were considered. Various were the conjectures formed, and suspicion naturally rested on Sir Arnould, of Tockenburg, but two of the Knights, who had honoured the Baron with their company, relieved him from all connivance with the plot, by declaring that on passing through Lauffenbourg, they had spent two days in his

company, and that he was on his route to Frankfort. Moreover they had travelled, with the utmost expedition to Ustar, after parting with him.

But supposing he had been present, by what means could he have effected the abduction of Blanche, since the windows of her room, were too far removed from the ground, to escape by that mode; and if in some castles, a ledge of stone projected from the wall, by which a bold individual, might advance from another apartment, and thus lead off the prize, yet here, the wall was quite smooth, and afforded no such advantage. Supposing Louisa had been bribed, to connive at her flight, how could the fact of her lady's door being bolted in the inside, be accounted for? For such was the case, and force was employed to gain an entrance. There was yet another means—a secret passage; but Sir Frederic was unacquainted with the existence of any private stair, and the panels had all been minutely sounded and

examined, and gave no indication of it. As human reason failed, in discovering the true cause, they could only live in hope, that time or chance would at length unravel the dreadful mystery.

Though the Baron and his lady, were uncertain in their opinion on this point, yet the domestics entertained no doubt whatever, and boldly attributed the awful disappearance of their mistress to supernatural means. Old Bertram, who had lived sixty years in the castle as boy and man, and had enjoyed the confidence of the father and grandfather of the present lord, supported and encouraged this idea, and also gave a circumstantial account of the wonders he had lately witnessed, particularly on that night, when he beheld the gigantic figure in white, fly through the garden; true it was, that Pauline hinted, she had left some linen out to bleach, and that being agitated by the wind, Bertram in passing the window, might easily have mistaken it for a flying figure, especially

as he was known to have indulged rather too freely in his cups on that memorable evening; but this reasonable solution, was treated with the utmost contempt, and rejected unanimously, as an affront to the courage and optical vision of Master Bertram, who assured Pauline, with considerable warmth, that he was not to be deceived, by any petticoat in the kingdom.

Louisa was now called upon to relate every circumstance connected with the subject. With an air of great mystery she observed, that it might be injurious to the comfort of the inmates of the castle, if she detailed all the particulars, with which she was acquainted; she would however gratify their curiosity, as far as prudence would permit, with the relation of an event which had happened two days before the disappearance of her lady.

“ Having been frequently awakened by music of no mortal sound, and various alarming noises, I resolved to watch the whole night, but nothing happened until

one o'clock, when I was terribly frightened, by a low rumbling sound, resembling thunder, which seemed to come from my mistress's room, suddenly a strong cold wind rushed through the door, and blew me down, there I remained for a considerable time, shaking like a leaf; presently I distinguished unearthly voices, but my curiosity prevailing over my fears, I summoned resolution to peep through a crevice, and saw"—“A ghost! a ghost!” exclaimed several voices.—“No,” replied the narrator, “but my poor lady standing with her hands clasped, and looking at a hideous giant with a black face—[Here all the party moved closer to each other]—I held my breath, but my limbs shook so, that my door rattled, and at that instant, the figure vanished through the solid wall in a clap of thunder. How long I remained insensible at the door, is beyond my power to say, but the morning dawned before I moved to my bed; and when my lady called me, I asked her about the

spirit, Oh! she was all of a tremble, and told me they were fearful things to speak of, and that it would be more prudent to be silent, if we wished to escape danger."

The whole group became so alarmed, on hearing these two veritable histories, that they determined, after fortifying their courage, with an additional cup of liquor, to retire *en masse* to their respective apartments; and no individual could be prevailed on, to pass after dark, the rooms lately occupied by the Lady Blanche, unless in company of two or three other domestics.

Soon after this melancholy event, the minds of the Baron and his lady were considerably relieved by the appearance of a peasant with the cloak of the Lady Blanche, which he had found floating in the Lake of Zurich, as this evidently proved, that she must certainly have escaped from the castle; but no positive tidings were received until after the mar-

riage of the Lord of Gratzburg. It will now be necessary to account for the sudden flight of Blanche, on the night previous to her wedding.

It has been stated, that the innocent girl received the addresses of Sir Arnould, with the full approbation, and even encouragement, of her affectionate parents; when therefore the bridegroom was so suddenly dismissed, in consequence of the Regensburg affair, she determined to soothe her sorrow with the hope, that her father would relent, and again receive Sir Arnould as his future son-in-law; but the war terminating, and he still continuing inexorable, and proceeding with his family on a visit to his sister, her spirits began to fail; and as the Lord of Gratzburg, shortly after his introduction, distinguished her by his preference, hope entirely fled, and she tacitly resolved, as a last resource, that she would demand permission (a request which could not be refused, through fear of offending the Church) to retire into a Convent. But

at this period, Sir Arnould contrived to communicate with her, and by his advice, she appeared to enter into her father's views, and to his great satisfaction, began to receive the attentions of her new lover, with less coldness, which induced their return to Ustar, in order that the marriage might be there celebrated.

After her arrival at the castle, Sir Arnould in vain sought opportunities, to arrange their final plans, until he was at length compelled to resort to the expedient of appearing as a musician, and thus attracting her attention, he planned an interview with her. Acquainted with the superstitious feelings of his countrymen, he had little fear of any interruption after midnight, and easily succeeded in his object, when he learnt from her all the particulars, regarding the day appointed for the ceremony; still the greatest difficulty remained, how to effect her escape from the castle—for she was never permitted to venture beyond the walls, unless in com-

pany with her father, or intended husband, and even then, she was guarded by a numerous escort. Arnauld was plunged into a state of the greatest mental agony, when Fortune favoured him in an unexpected manner, and promised to smooth his way to final success.

During his frequent visits to Ustar, both as a boy and man, he had become acquainted with the former Chatelain of the castle, who having, through age, retired from active life, dwelt in a small tower, the property of his wife, in the immediate neighbourhood. Here Arnauld resorted in his sporting excursions, and as Hildebrand possessed an extensive fund of entertaining stories, regarding the events of former times, and was indefatigable in relating them to his visitor, who was never tired of listening to them, he became a great favourite with the old warrior. During the period in which he made his mysterious visits to the castle, he sought and found protection from his old friend,

who observing the great alteration in his health and spirits, naturally enquired the cause, when the youth readily imparted to him his miserable situation, declaring that death only could relieve him, should he fail in rescuing his betrothed, from her approaching fate.

Hildebrand compassionating his sorrows, and not entertaining the same scrupulous ideas, regarding the conduct of the Count of Tockenbourg, as his lord, told him to resume his courage and his hopes, and then, under the solemn oath of secrecy, informed him, that a secret passage existed in that part of the castle, which led to the apartments of the Lady Blanche; it however had been so long disused, that the knowledge of it was only confined to himself.

“My honour, however, forbids me to entrust you with this important secret, on which the security of the castle depends, but if you are willing to place implicit confidence in me, I will safely conduct your mistress to your arms.”

“I embrace your generous offer,” replied the Knight, “with grateful thanks, but how can I ever repay you?”

“I have dandled your bride on my knee, I have assisted in her infantine gambols, I have witnessed the growing sweetness of her noble disposition, and would sacrifice my old useless body for her happiness; one kiss of her fair hand, when she becomes your wife, will more than repay me the risk; but I believe my lord himself will hereafter acknowledge my services.”

It now became necessary to inform Blanche, that Hildebrand would visit her, through a secret panel in her chamber, to communicate the final arrangements. Indeed it was a measure of absolute necessity, that Hildebrand should make the visit, to try all the doors, and oil the hinges and locks; and it was fortunate that he did so, as he found many of them so rusty, that it was with difficulty he could turn the keys; but his strength almost failed him, when he endeavoured to force the panels asunder,

and it was the rumbling noise they made, as they heavily slid open, that so alarmed Louisa, and it was also the strong draught of cold air, which suddenly rushing through the aperture, blew her down, (as she imagined,) and her black faced giant vanishing in a clap of thunder, was simply the aged chatelain in his armour, retiring through the secret passage. This event happened ten days previous to Blanche's escape. Bertram also was partly accurate in his description of the vision, for Sir Arnould had adopted the precaution of enveloping his person in a long white garment, for the purpose of encreasing the terror of the domestics. The Knights were also correct in their declaration, of having encountered him on their route, as he only returned the same evening on which Hildebrand performed the part of the gigantic apparition.

Having made the necessary preparations for their flight, the bridegroom received his lovely and trembling bride, from the hands of his aged friend, and proceeded

with the utmost rapidity to Bâsle, by a circuitous route, where they resided, until the marriage of the Count of Gratzburg relieved them from all apprehension of his interference. It was on crossing a river near Zurich, that Blanche lost her cloak; and though she regretted the circumstance at the moment, it eventually proved a source of some satisfaction to her parents.

The old Count of Tockenbourg died in the mean time, and thus the principal cause of their original separation was removed, and Sir Arnould, confidently anticipating a speedy reconciliation with Blanche's parents, dispatched a courier to Sir Frederic, entreating forgiveness in their united names; but by some accident the messenger never arrived. After waiting, in vain, for an answer, the young Count entrusted his cousin with the delicate commission, of softening the resentment of the Baron, and paving the way for their return. The affair was more easily arranged than he expected. Sir Frederic and his lady

having never ceased to regret their lost treasure, were ready to receive her again on any terms, especially her father, who could not help accusing himself of unnecessary harshness, in dismissing Sir Arnould, and compelling her to accept a man whom she could not love. But all recriminations were, by mutual consent, abandoned; and the Castle of Ustar again became the seat of peace and happiness; and their joy was doubly encreased, when Blanche presented them an heir, to the extensive domains of Ustar and Tockenbourg.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE painful state of constraint, in which Matilda had existed, during the few last months, had considerably impaired her health; for whilst inwardly suffering the intensity of suspense and anguish, she nobly endeavoured to assume a calm composure, and never permitted a murmur to escape her lips, when mixing in the family circle; but the effort always cost her dear, since the picture of the innocent gaiety and happiness of her Emmeline, with the husband of her choice, vividly recalled the enchanting sketches of domestic felicity, which she had so often drawn, in the day dreams of her young affection; but now that her once brilliant hopes were fast fading into shadow, the contrast between

her sister's brightening prospects, and her own encreasing difficulties, rendered her heart the more desolate; and though she joined in all the busy occupations of the morning, and felt, and acknowledged the sympathising kindness, and attentions of her mother and sister, yet her thoughts were ever absent, and engaged on other scenes.

At times, when Emmeline with playful affection, would exert all her fascinating powers of pleasing, to chase the melancholy smile from her hectic countenance, and would paint with the artless touches of nature, the scenes of earlier days, before care had cankered all her joys, she would for a few moments, relax from the contemplation of her hidden sorrows, and her features assuming a languid animation, would cheat her dear relatives with delusive hope. Occasionally, love, that child of nature, that principle of life, as necessary to the happiness of woman, as the air she breathes, would assert its power, and

triumphing over all opposing obstacles, would inspire, and invigorate her thoughts, and lighten her load of misery.

But her chief pleasure consisted in visiting the Abbey of Hildesheim; for, independant of the gloomy character of the ancient edifice, which accorded well with the sadness of her own feelings, the tomb of her murdered father possessed great attractions for her; and she would spend hour after hour in the contemplation of the dreadful change, which his untimely fate had occasioned in her prospects of life; for she felt well convinced, that had he been spared, her own Ernest would have been guided by his prudent advice, for he had invariably shown the greatest deference to the opinions of his guardian, and would not have risked the peace, nay even the life of her, to whom he had plighted his faith.

There was something also striking in the resemblance between the dilapidations which time was gradually making in all the

crumbling objects around, and the daily decay of her own perishing frame; and as she offered up her sincere prayers for the repose of her dear father's soul, the cold marble on which she knelt, chilled her lazy blood, and she grieved at the idea of the sorrows, which her affectionate relatives would experience, when pouring forth their supplications on this very spot, over her own mortal remains; but when she dwelt on the anguish of her wretched lover, at her untimely loss, for he would naturally accuse his own obstinacy, as the cause of her death, her heart died within her, her limbs trembled, and she burst into an agony of tears, which assuaged the pain of her broken heart. Love for a moment regained all its ardour, urging her to disregard the hateful decree, and escaping from its horrid constraint, to seek a refuge from her sorrows, on the bosom of her faithful Ernest.

The struggle between an earthly passion, and the severe duties which religion

enjoined, enfeebled her exhausted frame, and hastening to express her contrition for the momentary lapse, from the respect due to the commands of her spiritual Superior, she again sank on her knees, at the foot of her father's tomb, and fervently implored for strength, to support her under all her present misery, and to guard her from the errors, and passions, of her own weak heart. Whilst intently engaged in this pious duty, and as her prayer was ended, absorbed in deep reverie, a step of one cautiously advancing, as if fearful to disturb the silence of the tomb, struck on her startled ear; the sound gradually increasing, as the object approached nearer, she became alarmed, as the monks had now all departed, and not a sound, save that of the advancing step, disturbed the death-like silence, which reigned around; she feared to look behind; she heard the suppressed sigh; felt the warm breath; and her imagination kindled by the surrounding gloom, embodied a thousand phantoms in the deep

obscurity of the long aisles, dimly lighted by the last faint rays of the setting sun. She held her breath; her agitation increased to a painful degree, when a faint voice whispered in her listening ear, "Matilda." Relieved from her apprehension of unearthly beings, she turned slowly round, and beheld a Monk standing behind her, but could not distinguish his features, as the cowl was drawn closely over his face. He immediately addressed her in a deep and solemn voice, the tones of which appeared familiar to her ear.—

"Daughter, it grieves me to see, that my sudden approach, has occasioned some alarm to your gentle mind, but observing you engaged in offering up your prayers to that Being, unto whom all hearts are open, I feared to disturb your devotions; as my offence was unintentional, I must entreat your pardon."

"This is easily granted, good father, by one, who will so soon be summoned hence, and require it for her numerous sins."

Her reply was pronounced in such a mournful hollow voice, that it evidently had a strong effect on the Monk, whose whole frame shook, and his deep voice faltered, as he replied—

“ Daughter, if you, with all your purity, tremble at your approaching end, (which may the great and merciful God avert for years to come,) how shall those, whose manifold offences are of a deeper die, expect to escape from condemnation ?”

“ It is not for a sinful mortal to judge, or to doubt the wonderful extent of God’s mercy ; but if you have any communication to make, good father, pray proceed, as the evening shadows will soon begin to fall.”

“ If you still retain any affection for the unhappy Sir Ernest, if the remembrance of his love is dear to you, I have some news to impart, which may cause satisfaction to your afflicted heart.”

“ Oh God ! can he doubt the sincerity of my affection ? May that beneficent Being, who now reads my thoughts, turn

him from the paths of disobedience, and bend him to submit to the decrees of his spiritual Superior; and lead him again into the bosom of the church. Grant, Oh gracious Virgin! that my dying moments may be soothed with the consolation of knowing that the dreadful sentence has been cancelled, and that he may again be received with confidence, and affection, by his friends."

"Lady," replied the Monk, "If I am rightly acquainted with his sentiments, he would never consent to yield to the rapacious mandates of an imperious despot, if he for a moment imagined that you would not survive, to reap the benefit of his forced submission; though willing to pay every respect to the Pope, as the head of the church, he denies that his office gives him a right to interfere in the temporal concerns of the nobility."

"I had fondly imagined," Matilda modestly answered, "That the love which he has so strongly professed for me, was of a

more genuine character, and would have at once induced him to sacrifice some of his worldly interests, to promote our union. I would willingly, for his sake, have abandoned all my earthly wealth, could it in any degree, have contributed to his pleasure, or security; his reason is certainly clouded, for it is so unlike his usual generous disposition."

"Can the Lady Matilda possibly entertain such sentiments," impatiently demanded the Monk, (and the tones of his voice resembled those of Sir Ernest,) but recovering himself, he continued, "Pardon Lady, my regard for my friend has hurried me beyond the rules of propriety; but, if it will contribute, in the slightest degree, to alleviate your sorrows, I am commissioned by the Knight to declare, that before to-morrow's sun dawns, he will proceed on his route to Rome, and at once declare his submission to the head of the church; at the same time, in thus acting contrary to his own decided judgment, in an affair of such vital consequence to his

honour and interests, he is giving you the most decided proofs of his unaltered love."

"Tell him," the innocent girl replied, whilst her whole countenance beamed with animation, "That nothing can more effectually tend to soothe my sorrows, than this resolve, for it will enable me again to embrace the dear partner of my early joys;" and she grasped the gown of the Monk to support her sinking frame. The conscience of the Knight, for it was indeed Sir Ernest in disguise, smote him for his obstinacy, as he carried the fainting girl in his arms to the door, in order that the fresh air might revive her, and taking some of the holy water, he sprinkled her face, and could not resist the temptation of imprinting a warm kiss on her pale lips; but he was shocked, as the light streamed on her wan countenance, to observe, what ravages internal anguish had made, in a few short months; and he formed the mental resolution to speed with the utmost haste to Rome in the hope, that he might yet arrest the

fatal progress of her mental malady. Fearful of offending her religious scruples, by discovering himself, as she would shudder to think that she had come in contact with an excommunicated person, he again drew the cowl closer over his face, as he observed her returning animation ; and consigning her, though with a severe pang, to the care of her attendants, who had just returned from the village, after receiving her grateful thanks for his kind attention, and calling down blessings on her head, he slowly withdrew.

The evening closed as Matilda arrived at home, and having suffered great mental fatigue, from the exciting interest of her interview with the Monk, she early retired to rest. There was a latent suspicion, that she had really conversed with the dear object of her affections ; their height was the same, yet their voices were dissimilar, except for a few moments, when she certainly recognized the well known tones ; but considering his warm and impetuous

feelings, it puzzled her to account for his perfect control over them, on meeting with one, to whom he was so tenderly attached. She finally, however, came to the conclusion, that a stranger had addressed her, as he had betrayed no emotion at parting, beyond the blessing, which was a usual occurrence with the members of the church. She thought, that even a stranger, might have been permitted to display some degree of warmth, as she had just recovered from a fainting fit, and was evidently in such a delicate state. The Knight, however, would naturally preserve the strictest command over himself, for fear of disturbing her religious scruples; possibly his emotion might have really been great, as the cowl was drawn closely over his face. Again she was in doubt; and whilst balancing these opposite opinions, sleep overpowered her, and dreams of future happiness danced before her deluded imagination.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR Ernest had only returned to Grunengen late, the night before his interview with Matilda, at Hildeshiem; and full of love and hopes, was preparing on the following morning, to fly over to Greiffen, and throw himself at the feet of his beautiful mistress; but his design was interrupted, on meeting with Father Clement, at the moment of mounting his horse. The solemn tone, and melancholy countenance of his Confessor, struck a chill to his heart, as he demanded a private conference on matters of vital importance, which brooked of no delay. Retiring to his private cabinet, the good father unfolded with caution, (for he was well acquainted with the daring character of his

pupil,) the mournful intelligence; but when he stated, that the sentence of excommunication had been actually issued, the rage of the Knight exceeded all description. He swore in his wrath, that he would march to Rome, at the head of his retainers, and beard the insolent miscreant to his face, if he did not at once abandon his infamous claims to the property of an individual, who owed him no allegiance, and that he would drive his trusty dagger into his heart. Then turning to Clement—

“ Can you, good father, support such injustice? Did not my ancestors build the Abbey with their own money—endow it with their own lands—on condition that their descendant should enjoy the right of appointing the Abbot, subject, however, to the approbation of the Pope? On what principle of justice then, does he now demand, that I should abandon my title, and bow in submission to his haughty dictates? ”

“ My son,” meekly replied the father,

who knew it was in vain to argue with an angry man, “ The question is not whether his Holiness exceeds his authority, (yet be it remembered, that the Emperors themselves claim the appointment to all benefices, and exercise this right, whenever they are strong enough,) or whether it is your duty to submit to your spiritual Superior, but resolves itself simply into this, whether you love the Lady Matilda, and would rather submit to any sacrifice, than hasten her to an early grave ? ”

The effect of these few words electrified the late indignant youth ; his lofty bearing, his looks of stern resolve, all rapidly disappeared, like a passing cloud. Seizing the hand of Clement, he falteringly requested him to explain the alarming import of his words. The worthy old man, with his usual tenderness of manner, detailed all the circumstances, which had passed during his absence, and dwelt particularly on the changed state of Matilda’s health, arising from her constant fear of that fatal

sentence, which at length bursting in all its fury, had shattered her weak frame. The tears fell from the aged eyes of the Monk, as he mournfully concluded—

“ Her days are numbered on the earth ; she is as a beautiful flower, which to-day spreads its opening graces, soon fades, and to-morrow is no more seen.”

Sir Ernest instantly decided on the course he would pursue, but entreated the Confessor to procure him one short interview with the object of his affections, before his departure for Rome ; this however being inadmissible, from the religious scruples of his mistress and her mother, who had decided on not admitting him to the castle, during the continuance of the anathema ; Clement then informed him of Matilda's frequent visits to her father's tomb, in the Abbey of Hildesheim, and suggested the idea of the disguise, provided he could possibly control his impetuous feelings, as a discovery might prove fatal, in her present state of exhaustion. The de-

sign (as has been related,) was carried into execution with happy success: and the unfortunate lover too truly observed, when he carried her lifeless form to the light, that the predictions of Clement were indeed likely soon to be verified, unless the edict were withdrawn.

Independant of his devotion to his affianced bride, he saw the necessity of prompt measures, even in his own castle; for the Monk had peremptorily declined partaking any viands with him, on the plea of religion, and when the servants had removed the repast, which they did, with evident disgust, he observed them throwing away the rich viands to the dogs, and spilling even the generous old wine, which he had left untasted in his goblet; so fearful were they even of touching the food of an excommunicated person.

On leaving the Abbey, Sir Ernest proceeded towards Rome, attended by a few faithful domestics, who determined to follow their generous Lord in evil as well as

good report. Animated by the apparently dangerous state of Matilda's health, he pressed forward with the greatest speed, and arriving after incredible exertions, instantly applied to the Pope's secretary, but was surprized and offended at the coldness of his reception. For having surrendered himself into the power of the church, the affair became much more serious, than he had at first expected. He now regretted, that he had not consented to the proposal of Clement, to permit him to arrange the terms, but he had dreaded his tardy mode of proceeding, and feared that death would have terminated the sufferings of its lovely victim, before the pious father could have performed one half of his journey; but repentance was now useless. He had come in the spirit of conciliation, and was prepared to make great concessions, but soon discovered, that the more he granted, the greater the demands became; so that in self-defence, he was obliged to show his spirit, and ab-

solutely refused to submit to any further exactions.

The negotiation made no progress, and his own impatience increased with the unnecessary delays, that were daily interposed; but at length, a friend to whom he had been recommended by Father Clement, paved the way for a more speedy and amicable adjustment of the existing differences, by presenting a handsome *douceur* to the Secretary; the affair was then fully arranged, and Sir Ernest subscribed to the following terms—"That he considered the Pope as his lawful Superior, and promised to pay him annually, a bag of ducats, for the lands attached to the Abbey of Hildesheim, and would be faithful to him, and his successors, duly elected; and also acknowledged the right of his Holiness to nominate the Abbot." But all his strenuous endeavours to escape the disagreeable ceremony of penance, were unavailing, for being in the lion's den, he was obliged to submit; and on the ensuing day, prostra-

ting himself on a hair cloth before the Pope, in the presence of several Bishops, Canons, and Monks, he acknowledged himself guilty of the charge brought against him; on which his sword and belt being restored, he again declared the Pope his Superior, and said—"Have pity on your repentant Son—he deserved to die, but will be obedient in future; and repents of his folly and wickedness." Afterwards, proceeding to the altar, and being absolved from his sins, the sentence of excommunication was withdrawn.

Flying on the wings of love, he yet hoped to lead the blushing Matilda to the altar, and by the most tender and unremitting attentions, to obliterate the memory of her cruel sorrows. At the same time, his lofty spirit swelled with indignation, at the idea of the humiliating punishment to which he had been subjected, and he firmly resolved, at the first convenient opportunity, to disavow the whole proceeding, as an act of compulsion. But he kept this

determination to himself, not deeming it prudent to resort to violent measures, without the prospect of a vigorous support from the Emperor; and proposed, under all circumstances, to remain perfectly passive at the present moment, in order to calm the apprehensions of his lovely bride.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE strength of Matilda began rapidly to decline, and the more earnestly she endeavoured to conceal her sorrows, from the observation of her family, the more deeply the malady made inroads in her constitution. Her mother was not aware of the danger which now threatened her life, for her spirits, when appearing in company, retained some portion of their former vivacity; besides, her countenance had not undergone any material alteration. But Emmeline, possessed of more intuition than her mother, penetrated into the real state of her sister's health, and conscious that, in a great measure, we generally derive our happiness or misery, from the complexion of our own thoughts, when

flying from social intercourse, we indulge too much in solitude, she devoted her whole time to her society, and practised a thousand simple artifices to promote her amusement.

Matilda, sensible of the kind motive, which induced her to neglect, even her beloved husband for her sake, though she derived the greatest satisfaction from her affectionate attentions, (since by withdrawing her thoughts from the solitary contemplation of her sorrows, it softened their intense bitterness,) yet could not consent to enjoy a selfish pleasure, at the expence of Hugo's happiness: and therefore urged Emmeline, to devote more of her time to him. But a sweet smile played over her languid features, when Emmeline assured her, it was with his concurrence, and even at his suggestion, that she originally undertook this sisterly duty.

“ But I yet hope, my own Matilda, that the return of dear Ernest, which may now be daily expected, will chase away your

despondency, and restore the proper tone to your mind, and the bloom to your cheeks."

"No, Emmeline, no: I fondly imagined that Ernest would, in pity to my feelings, have yielded in the first instance, but hope deceived makes the heart sick: it is now too late—the happy time is passed. Think not that I despond too soon, my mind still retains its firmness, but my bodily strength has failed."

"True, dearest sister, you have indeed made wonderful exertions, which have possibly accelerated your disorder; but hope still flatters me, that our projected tour to Altenburg, after Ernest's arrival, will effect wonders, and renovate your strength."

"It is vain to deceive you, Death has already marked me for his own, I feel his deadly arrow in my heart, there is an icy coldness there, which hourly spreads its baneful influence; my blood flows less rapidly, my pulse becomes fainter. I feel for my poor Ernest; when I am dead, and

gone to my long home, he will be left desolate; but my misery is greatly diminished, in leaving you, dearest and ever affectionate sister, under the protection of a husband, who is so well calculated, to appreciate your engaging simplicity of manners, and artless sincerity; and I am conscious that my dear mother will not feel my loss so deeply, whilst you are spared, to be the support of her declining years."

Emmeline sat silent, and answered only with her sobs, when Matilda, drawing her to her bosom, whispered comfort to the weeping girl.

Early on the following morning, Sir Ernest, now absolved from the dreadful interdict, the cause of so much sorrow, rode rapidly along the well known valley, and in anxious doubt reached the castle-gate. His first demand, was the state of Matilda's health; but the solemn look, the starting tear, spoke any thing but consolation to the wretched youth, and rushing to

the presence of Ethelinda, he endeavoured to read in her countenance, some more favourable news; but, alas! hope had fled. Before her voice confirmed the melancholy tidings, of the declining situation of the beloved invalid—

“Fatal obstinacy!” exclaimed the Knight, “had I imagined for an instant, that it would have produced such cruel results, the Church might have seized, without opposition, those just rights appertaining to that Abbey, which the liberality of my ancestors founded, and which their property now supports.”

“It is useless, dear Ernest,” replied the lady, “to indulge in these vain regrets, nor am I sufficiently acquainted with the ecclesiastical laws to decide on the merits of the question, but it certainly is our bounden duty, to submit, without murmur, to the commands of our holy Father. It would, however, be presumptuous in me to declare, that the uneasiness, occasioned by this unhappy dispute, has

been the primary cause of my sweet child's rapid disorder."

"Oh! in mercy, do not dash all my fond anticipations of joy; allow some faint glimmer of hope, to cheer my drooping spirit."

"It would be worse than folly," tenderly replied the afflicted mother, "to flatter you with delusive expectations, which can never be realized, on this side of the grave. I had permitted my own affection to mislead me, with the idea, that the languor, which disappointment shed over her still beautiful features, would all vanish at your approach, but the veil has at length been withdrawn from my eyes, and the sad reality of her rapidly approaching death, alone presents itself to my view."

"Gracious God! what a fate has ambition prepared for me! And have I bartered the possession of that being, for whom I would at any moment have sacrificed my life, for the paltry consideration of nominating an Abbot?—a right which

after all, has been wrested from me. Father Clement then was correct—fool! madman! that I am. But I cannot yet abandon myself to despair; your fears deceive you. She is purity itself—we will all unite, and offer up our fervent prayers for her restoration, at the altar of our Lady of Einsidlin.”

“Ernest, the draught is bitter, but the cup must be emptied to its dregs. What God hath ordained, man must submit to with pious resignation; and the Angel of Death, hath surely summoned the spotless victim to another, and a better world. But we waste the precious time in unavailing lamentations, I will prepare the sweet sufferer to receive you, for she lives only in the hope of taking, a last and eternal farewell, of the dear partner of her early sports. But let me entreat you to control these violent feelings, for the exhibition of your sorrow, will only tend to lacerate her gentle heart.”

In a few minutes the youth, who scarce

an hour before, had ascended the hill, in all the pride of manly strength, now barely dragged along his tottering limbs, when summoned to the presence of his mistress.

He found her enjoying the partial sunbeams of an autumnal sun, in the favourite arbour, where the sweetest scenes of their young love had passed, and where he had breathed his first fond aspirations into her willing ear. As he approached the loved spot, her brilliant eye sparkled with unusual lustre; her flushed and hectic countenance, expressed the pleasure which she experienced at again meeting her own Ernest, after so long an absence: all his distracting fears were instantly dissipated, and giving a loose to joy, he pressed his trembling bride to his panting breast, and forgot all his past miseries in the delirium of that moment, in which he lived an age of joy. He renewed his vows of affection, poured forth all the long pent-up fondness of his heart; implored her at once to name that hour, in which he might dedicate his

future life, to promote the happiness of a being so idolized.

But the first excitement over, the hollow tone of her weak voice, as it fell on his startled ear, and the wasted appearance of that form, which, even when he last saw it, was gracefully rounded, in all the beauty of perfect symmetry, recalled his heated imagination, to a just perception of the melancholy truth; and Matilda herself, at once dispelled the last faint traces of his momentary illusion.

“Those only, dear Ernest, who have loved with the sincerity that I have done, can imagine the agony I have experienced, lest death should have summoned me, before I had once more reassured you of my unaltered tenderness. If it is a sin to abandon oneself to passion, guilt I fear must be attached to me, but it has been a passion founded on reason, and authorized by an intimate knowledge of your many dignified virtues; and it would have been a sweet source of pleasure, as it would have

been my duty, and my pride, to have contributed to the ease and happiness of your life. But since this satisfaction has been, perhaps wisely, denied me, let me entreat you, when I am gone, not to indulge in useless sorrow, but to transfer that affection, which you have entertained for me, to some other female, who may be fully capable of estimating your sterling merits; and I have no doubt, that many objects, equally worthy of your love, will present themselves to your notice."

"Never, Matilda, never; your dear image is too indelibly engraven on my heart, ever to be eradicated. That moment when, like a delicate flower, just bursting into beauty and fragrance, you modestly consented to be mine, is ever present to my view; it is my dream by day, and in nightly visions, your lovely form guards me, as a protecting Angel, from danger. If such perfection is, indeed, no longer permitted to grace the earth, the hour that consigns the best, the

purest, the fairest of nature's creation, to an untimely tomb, shall seal my own fate: for without you, my first, my last, my only love, life will indeed be insupportable. But those tears assure me, that my vehemence distresses you; pardon me, my sweet angel, I will moderate my grief, though my heart is breaking."

"It would materially soften my anguish, dearest Ernest," said Matilda, tenderly pressing his hand between her own, and looking wistfully in his face, were I assured that you would abandon these violent intentions, and following my advice, seek some object, fairer perhaps, but not truer, on whom, when the first agony of your grief is passed, to lean for consolation. You were born for social life, and for nobler purposes, than to pine for the loss of a poor weak woman."

"It can never be, my own true love, and it pains me to refuse your request, but there is a feeling within, which assures me, that my lamp is almost exhausted; the

flame may flicker some short time, ere it dies, but it shall flash in brightness, in its last expiring moments, on the battle-field, for my country's honour."

"Well, be it so," she plaintively said, "if Providence ordains it, but I could wish it otherwise."—(then pointing to the rustic bridge, where Ernest had saved her life) "It would have gratified my feelings, had my exhausted strength, enabled me once more to visit, in your company, that dear spot, which love has sanctified with so many grateful recollections; but I must be content to view it from a distance. It has been my favourite resort; it is there, that you have always been present in spirit, and holding sweet converse with me, have recalled all the incidents of that memorable evening, when your protecting hand preserved my fragile form from destruction. How buoyant were our hopes at that period! how fondly we anticipated years of never dying joy! but alas! how vain is man's weak judgment! that which gilded

the moment with joy, now occasions only misery. But the cool air of this autumnal evening, warns me to be gone; my blood is chilled in my veins, you must support my feeble frame, dear, dear Ernest. Oh God! my heart is like an icicle, it will be the last time you will have to perform this duty for me, but it will be a consolation to you, to remember, that the last hour you passed with your expiring Matilda, was one of the purest love. May God have mercy on me, and may my Saviour obtain pardon of my sins."

He pressed the fainting girl to his heart, the scene had been too exhausting for her strength, her fleeting spirit was ready to wing its flight. Laying the almost lifeless burthen on the couch, she expired a few moments after, in the arms of her mother and sister.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was a dark and wintry day, at the close of Autumn, when a corpse was borne in slow procession to its last home; the gloom of the weather was in unison with the melancholy occasion; the solemn tolling of the Abbey bell, struck at intervals heavily on the startled ear, as the death warrant of the departed; whilst the wreaths of white flowers, were an emblem of her purity. A tall and majestic female hung over the grave, and struggled to retain her composure, but the heaving bosom, and scarce suppressed sob, betrayed the mother's feelings; and when the creaking of the cords, as the attendants lowered the coffin, announced that the last remains of beauty and innocence, were consigned to

an untimely tomb, her grief burst forth in all its unrestrained violence. At the head of the vault, a beautiful girl stood with her hands clasped, the statue of mute despair, and pale as the marble itself. One other mourner attracted deep attention, and commiseration, it was a noble and commanding figure, closely enveloped in a cloak, but ever and anon, as the folds fell back, a youthful countenance was exposed to partial view, on which the deepest sorrow was strongly impressed: the ashy paleness of the lips, the large drops of perspiration on the forehead, the glazed eye fixed on the cold yawning grave, the sudden and convulsive shudder, as pieces of gravel occasionally dropt on the coffin, plainly shewed the most intense interest in the scene. The last faint tones of the requiem were dying away, as the figure still entranced in mute reverie, and apparently unconscious of all around, was passively led away by the noble Sir Hugo, whilst he still cast a last lingering look of

anguish on that spot, where all his hopes of earthly bliss were buried.

For weeks, the flowers, which the lateness of the season afforded, were daily renewed, and scattered round the tomb of departed innocence, and the stately figure, now clad in the garb of a Knight, (which had appeared on the morning of the funeral, plunged in the deepest grief,) was observed to take its station on the same spot, and remain wrapt in deep contemplation, until the tinkling of the silver bell announced the conclusion of Vespers, when it slowly and unwillingly withdrew; and shortly after, appeared seated at a window at Grunengen Castle, which commanded a view of Hildesheim Abbey, until a late hour of the night, as if desirous of ever keeping his eyes fixed on that spot, which contained the remains of his first and only love.

At length an elegant monument of white marble raised its simple form, in honour of the departed, and bore the inscription—

“ Sacred to the memory of the virtuous Matilda. May her ashes rest in peace.” Months had now elapsed, when the youthful mourner, after passing the whole night in the abbey, at the tomb of her, whom he had prized dearer than life, and bequeathing a considerable sum, for the express purpose of saying masses for the repose of her soul, bade an eternal adieu to the scenes of his youth, and the land of his ancestors.

A year had elapsed, when, as the Emperor Rodolph was on the eve of engaging in battle,* with Henry of Bavaria, a Knight cased in black armour, at the head of a numerous body of retainers, appeared on the field, and soon carried death and destruction amongst the enemy ; he seemed to keep a watchful eye on all the movements of the Emperor, and frequently interposed his body, when he was severely pressed, and several times saved his life ; at length,

* The battle is historical.

Henry on the point of being entirely defeated, made a last desperate effort at the head of a chosen body of Knights, to bear down the King by main force, and thus restore the fortune of the day. Success at first favoured the design; for the attendants being all overthrown or slain, Rodolph himself, after performing prodigies of valour, was on the point of terminating his hitherto splendid career, under the victorious spears of his adversaries, for his horse having been pierced through the shoulder fell to the ground, and being unable to rise, a Bavarian Knight, of immense stature, having dismounted, had raised his huge battle-axe high in the air, to deprive him at once of empire, and of life, and thus again to plunge his native country in all the horrors of an interregnum; when fortunately before the blow fell on its prostrate victim, his own life paid the price of his treason; as the spear of the black Knight, who had been momentarily pursuing his advantage in another quarter of the field, and had

returned at the critical moment, drank his life's blood, and the huge carcass rolled on the earth.

There was no time for compliment or delay, but ordering his Squire to disengage, and re-mount the Emperor, he pressed on at the head of his chosen band, now much reduced in number, and dealing death and destruction around, soon dispersed the fierce Henry's late triumphant troop. Rodolph rallying his broken squadrons, restored the battle, nor paused in his onward progress, until victory again set on the Imperial standards ; but amidst the shouts of the troops, saluting the Emperor as conqueror, might be heard the sigh of regret, for the fall of the gallant Knight in the sable armour, who had so much contributed to the success of the day. Weak from the great loss of blood, arising from the many wounds he had received, he fell back on his horse, in the last charge, and his faithful attendants were lifting him to the ground, at the very moment Rodolph

rode up to thank his brave deliverer. Cutting the fastenings of his helmet, the well-known features of Sir Ernest, of Grunengen, were exposed to view; but how changed in appearance! for grief had made sad ravages on that manly expression of beauty, which had, in the last year, captivated many a female heart at the Imperial Court. Water was brought to moisten his parched lips, but death had already terminated his hopes and sorrows, and the spirit had fled, to join its kindred soul in happier climes.

The Emperor lamented over the fate of one, whom he had known and loved, from his earliest infancy, and more deeply grieved for the loss of a sincere friend and subject, at this important moment, when he had experienced such convincing proofs of his devoted attachment, and when his bravery might still have so eminently contributed, to fix the tottering crown on his brows. Ordering the body to be removed with all due respect, to the neighbouring Abbey of

Arnheim, it was there interred with military honours, the Emperor himself attending at the head of his officers; and many a tear was shed—for valour, especially when so successful, always claims the respect of the generous and brave. In after times, when the star of his gallant competitor, the King of Bohemia, had sunk under the superior fortune of the conqueror, and peace being restored to the distracted empire, enabled Rodolph to turn his thoughts to other subjects, a simple monument was erected at his expence, to the memory of his gallant friend.

Gaining Henry to his interest, the Emperor traversed Lower Bavaria, by Ratisbon and Passan, and advanced to the walls of Vienna, which soon after opened its gates. In the mean time, Ottocarus had arrived by forced marches on the banks of the Danube, with an army reduced by fatigue and want; and hearing that Rodolph was preparing to cross the river, by means of his portable boats, he was compelled to

bow in abject submission to his Sovereign, and to do homage on his knees for the kingdom of Bohemia.

To conclude, in the words of an historian—"Considering the state in which he found Germany, and left it at his death, the smallness of his means, the power of his adversaries, the greatness of his actions, his address, moderation and prudence, his firmness, his amiable qualities as a man, Rodolph was one of the greatest Sovereigns, who ever filled a throne. He struck terror amongst the licentious Barons, restored order; the peasant resumed his plough, and the merchant traversed the country with confidence."

FINIS.







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